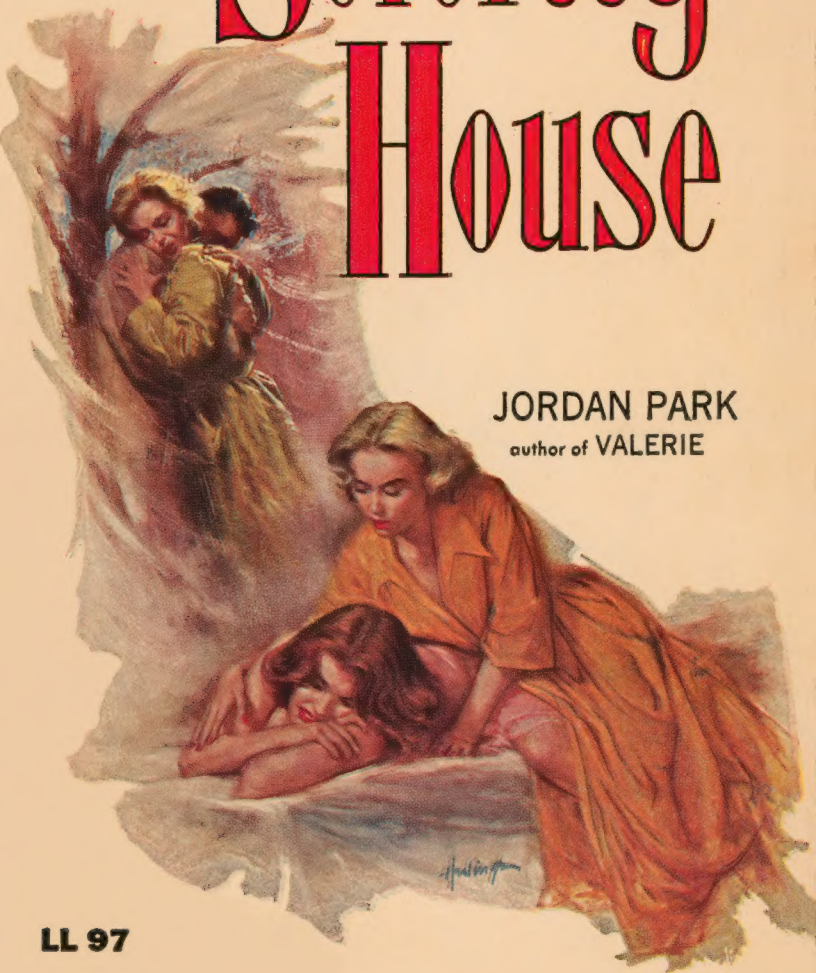




IT WAS A DESPERATE PLACE—
OF WOMEN, GUILT, AND DESIRE

Sorority House

JORDAN PARK
author of VALERIE



LL 97



They don't teach it in the classroom . . .

It's called *Experience*, and it's the most popular subject on the campus. You do research on your own—sometimes in places where nice young college girls aren't expected to go . . . and you write your own textbook as you go along.

There are no tests except examinations of conscience—and a lot depends on how easily you pass those . . .





A Lion Library Original

SORORITY HOUSE

Jordan Park



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SORORITY

HOUSE

I

Girls, Ad Simmons thought. Another season, another crop—slim and beautiful, short and tall, overdressed, overanxious—a girl for every taste. Step right up, gentlemen, and take your pick . . .

Ad smiled to himself, pulling his cab into the station. They would get off the train, vibrant and eager, every shape, size, form and figure, the sophisticated and the innocent. But the innocent would lose that look in a hurry, Ad decided. Innocence just wasn't the style here. Even the youngest in the group would soon be displaying their womanhood like the latest fashion in sweaters.

What most of these kids learned, even in a small town college like Eleusis, Ad thought, had nothing much to do with books. It came from lessons taught in the seclusion of automobiles and dimly-lighted rooms at weekend houseparties. Some of the kids came by it naturally, because they were too good looking to avoid it, and others got it the hard way—by chasing after it. But either way, it all went under the heading of Experience.

Driving the town's only taxi, Ad heard more than his share of the stories. And more than once he had taken these girls on furtive rides at night to places that nice girls weren't supposed to know about. It wasn't easy to keep a secret in a town with a population of 4,500.

Ad yawned. As usual the train was late. It was the 9:27, three battered coaches and a baggage car, and it finally clanked to a stop at 9:35. Eleusis, elevation 632 feet above sea level, built of frame houses, nourished by dairy-farming and a dogfood mill across the tracks, ignored it except for Ad. Blinking in a slant of September Pennsylvania sunshine, he reached back and opened the right rear door. There was no need to get out and hustle; they would see the TAXI on

the shirt cardboard taped to his windshield and they'd come to him.

The first was a dark little girl, maybe seventeen, carrying a suitcase that turned out to be a laundry mailer when she walked up. Her hair was black and frizzled and Ad, who had daughters, knew what a cheap home permanent was, and grinned. Get it done right next time, cutie, instead of spending all your money on new dresses.

She looked uncertainly at the cardboard sign. "Taxi," Ad said gently.

"Do you go to the Eleusis Academy?" she asked.

"I go anywhere. Put your luggage in the trunk and climb in." She still hesitated, and he understood. "Fifty cents," he said, "and I don't take tips." She managed a smile, heaved her luggage into the trunk and got in. Ad saw her reaching to close the door and said, "Ah-ah. More coming. That looks like one of 'em now." He let out a low whistle, self-mocking and satirical, and winked at the dark little girl in the rear-view mirror.

The girl coming from the station was a theatrical beauty who wore a powder-blue spring suit as though it were a double handful of strategically placed sequins and who trod the dusty blacktop as though it were the runway of a refined burlesque house. Tall, long-legged, brilliantly blonde, she sported a perfect, frozen mask of makeup.

"Taxi," Ad said energetically. "Here y'are, miss, taxi to the Academy." And winked again, secretly, at the dark little girl.

"Thank God," the blonde said. "I was held up by that damn fool with the baggage. I was sure you'd be gone, Ad, and I'd have a lovely half-hour to kill in this plague spot of yours." Surprisingly, the perfect frozen puss was capable of a warm grin. The blonde plumped herself in the back seat beside the dark girl and gave her a candid stare. "I'm Joy Squires," she said. "Soph. Journalism major. You're new, aren't you?"

"Yes," the dark girl said.

"Well, don't *cower*, kid! What's your name, where do you come from, what are you going to take, why did you ever pick this Godforsaken dump?"

The dark girl smiled in spite of herself. "I'm Kathryn Jackson."

"Kathryn's a lousy name to have," the blonde said judiciously. "A boy gets to wondering whether it's C-A-T-H or K-A-T-H and where the E's go and he winds up not writing to you at all. I knew one once."

"Mine's pretty bad," the dark girl said. "K-A-T-H-R-Y-N is the way my mother spelled it."

"A real stinker. Well, you can change it when you're free, white and twenty-one. Where you from?"

"A little place called—Poole Hollow. Susquehanna County, the next one over."

"Poole Hollow. My aching back! And what sticks you in Eleusis?"

"Scholarship."

"Ah-hah. A bright one. Good. You can tutor me. Journalism?"

"Classical language and literature. I want to be a Latin teacher."

"God in Heaven, *why?*"

The dark girl flared: "Why do people usually get jobs? So they'll be able to eat and clothe themselves and pay the rent."

"Okay, okay," the blonde said cheerfully. "But my little ole idea—and I don't for a moment claim it's original—is that jobs are for men to hold and men are for women to hold. Sure, I'll work for a couple of years on a paper or a magazine when I get sprung, but—hello, stranger!"

That was a yell of greeting to another girl peering into the back seat. "I see your resolution broke down," the blonde said delicately.

"What are you talking about? Oh, the diet. Yes, and so what?" The girl eased herself into the seat between Kathryn Jackson and Joy Squires. She was a plump brownette with a near-sighted, abstracted look.

"Clara Gwynn, sophomore, may I present Kathryn Jackson, freshman. She's going to be a Latin teacher."

"Good for you, Kathryn," Clara Gwynn said. "I'm slopping around in the English department; I don't know why."

"Are you going to teach?" the dark girl asked.

"I don't think so. I don't seem to get around to the psy-

chology courses you need. I just slop around in Beowulf and 18th Century Essayists and things like that."

"How was the vake?" Joy Squires asked. "Any fun?"

"Oh, I don't know. Mother and Father and a few parties and some swimming and some tennis and some golf. As usual. I was going to write some short stories but I didn't get around to them."

"I," said Joy, "had a ball. I was the toast of New Milford. In the short span of seven weeks I received forty-one indecent proposals."

"Good for you," Clara Gwynn said. "Mr. Simmons, what are we waiting for?"

"Her," said Ad, pointing with his thumb.

"No, she's no student," Joy said. "She wasn't at the Academy last year and she's too old to be a freshman. Twenty, if she's a day."

But the girl coming from the station headed for the taxi.

"Academy?" Ad called out.

"Yes," she said. "I suppose I sit up front?"

"All the room that's left," Ad said. As she slid easily into the seat Joy Squires muttered to Clara, "Sleek." The girl in front said easily, "Thanks, dear. You're pretty too. Do we go now?"

"Sure," said Ad, grinning. He cranked the motor into life, shifted and swung the Dodge into a U-turn. For a couple of minutes they rolled along the blacktop of Broad Street, Eleusis, Pennsylvania: one drug store, two dry-goods stores, Grange League Federation Farm Supplies, Woolworth, Norge Appliances, Oil Burner Sales and Service, Fords New and Used, Buckle's Garage, Body and Fender Shop, Collision Work a Specialty. . . .

Abruptly it wasn't Broad Street any more but a two-lane concrete state highway marked with keystone-shaped number signs. Ad Simmons stepped it up from twenty to thirty-five.

Joy Squires asked the girl in front, "Are you a new teacher?"

"No—just a senior transfer. From California."

"Tennis, anyone?" Joy asked brightly.

The girl laughed richly. "We're not all like that. Personally, I write. My name's Ann Riker. Do any of you read the *New New Review*?"

Clara said thoughtfully, "I've *heard* of it, but I can't say I've ever seen a copy. I always thought those magazines didn't really exist—people just made up quotations and said they were from *Sewanee* or *Partisan* or *New New*. Do you write for them?"

"They've run a couple of pieces of mine," Ann Riker said. She lit a cigarette.

Joy said, "Why the transfer to Eleusis?"

"I got tired of my last school and I picked Eleusis Academy out of the list in the *World Almanac* with a pin—practically. Naturally after I picked it out I checked and it seems to be a very nice place to spend a year. Accredited by the Northeastern Association, so scholastically it's clean. Good man running the Journalism Department—Pulitzer Prize man in fact. Good student-teacher ratio. And there's a chapter of the Lambs."

"You a Lamb, Miss Riker?"

"Ann to you. Yes, I'm of the sisterhood."

Kathryn Jackson cleared her throat and asked, "What's a lamb?"

Even Clara laughed. Joy said, "A Lamb is a member of LLL, or Lambda Lambda Lambda, one of our two sororities and by far the snootier of the two. It's of no practical importance to you or me or Clara; we couldn't make it in a million years."

"For that," the girl from California said, "I'll get you all in."

They laughed.

Kathryn's laughter was polite, without bitterness. For most of her seventeen years she had choked back the bitterness. A sorority was unthinkable in college, as it had been in high school—as unthinkable as playing with the nice girls in grammar school. Luckily there were things one could do about it. One could work long and hard, pushing fatigue aside as irrelevant. One could practice penmanship endlessly and achieve a perfect hand, memorize the hard words to spell, diagram sentences until the logic of English was second nature. In high school, Latin was obviously the ticket to respectability so you memorized the elementary grammar in two weeks, mowed down Caesar, Cicero and

Virgil in three years and clamored for more. When you could work hard there was no need for bitterness. . . .

I suppose, Clara Gwynn thought, I should have tried for Lambs last year. People came around and hinted and I was vague and they were polite and that was the last I heard of it. Maybe this year I'll give it a try. Mother'd like it. And maybe I'll take off a few pounds and get some clothes so I can be decorative for the Lambs. They don't like fat girls around the House. Mother'd like that, too. Gwynn Coal and Iron, Inc. doesn't like fat girls, especially for her daughter. I wish I'd gone to the University of Pittsburgh, or Penn. Things'd be livelier there, maybe I'd find some courses I could get interested in instead of that big stupid oaf Beowulf and his dumb friends. But I don't suppose Mother would like that. She went to Eleusis Academy, I go to Eleusis Academy; and that's that. And when I get married to some big stupid oaf and have a daughter, *she* goes to Eleusis Academy. . . .

Maybe, Joy Squires said to herself, it wasn't *forty-one*, but it was close. I didn't really keep count. And now, high-ho, for another glamorous, glittering semester at Eleusis Academy for *Women*. Well, thank God for the faculty. I guess Jim Henschel's still around and I guess he'll do for a little smooching if that old devil Dr. Matthewson doesn't get wise and sling us both out. Old prune. Virgin old prune at seventy-four, I guess she is. No; she wouldn't sling me out. Jim, maybe, but not me. Mumsie pays cash on the barrelhead for little Joy's education—or rather Popsie does, the poor dear. I wonder how he's getting along with that redhead of his? Must be two-three years now since he's been around. Not that I blame him. Mumsie gives him the big hello for one minute by the stopwatch and then comes Topic A, Money. Every time he shows up it costs him. I shouldn't complain, though; a girl's best friend is her alimony and where would little Joy be without Mumsie?

I'll have to take it easier with Jim this year. Wonder if all the Ph.D.'s are like him? He's a little older than the Milford crowd and maybe a wee bit harder to handle. But why worry? As long as a girl chain-smokes on a date there's nothing to worry about. Gran'ma can stick up for the old-fashioned hatpin, but there's nothing like a lighted cigarette

when a hand wanders too far, and you can always but always pretend it was an accident and the poor mutt has to go along with you. . . . I wonder if this Riker gal meant it about the Lambs, not that I give a damn. It might be fun to live in the Lambs House, and then again I hear there's an awful lot of clothes swapped among the pledged sisters and that I don't think I'd go for. Hah—there'll be no clothes swapped between me and Riker; my 34-23-34 would *sag* from her. Oh, she looks good, what there is of her, but a minor-leaguer. . . .

And Ann Riker: I'm doing very nicely. What did I say? "—tired of my last school—" with just the right bored inflection, just the tone of a born traveler and changer; there wasn't a flicker of curiosity in any of their faces. . . .

Ad Simmons shifted into second; there were two red-brick gateposts with inset granite oblongs; on the left was carved an academic coat of arms with lamps, quills, scrolls. On the right was carved: ELEUSIS ACADEMY FOR WOMEN 1860.

Ad sent the old Dodge crawling between the posts onto a wide gravel road between dark pine groves. A hundred yards later the carefully-planned vista of the Academy burst into view. There was a green central mall flanked by Georgian buildings, red brick with white-columned porticoes and green copper roofs. At the rear of the mall the vista was closed by a handsome building with a white meeting-house steeple.

Ann was startled. "Why, it's quite lovely!"

Clara said absently, "It is a small college, but there are those who love it."

"Until they meet Dr. Matthewson," Joy added. She turned to the dark little girl, Kathryn. "The view's the best part of old Eleusis. Like it?"

Kathryn Jackson could only nod, overcome with emotion at the sight of the campus where she would spend her next four years.

"I guess," Ad Simmons said, "you want the Administration Building." He drove down the gravel that bordered the Mall.

"There's your Lambs House," Joy Squires said to the girl from California. "And across the way is the DXK's shack. Naturally nobody but *rabble* belongs to DXK, since they

were founded about ten years after the Lambs. And that's the West Dormitory where I expect you'll wind up along with the rest of us."

"Science Building, Gym, Social Studies," Clara said. "If those old walls could talk."

"What a prodigious yawn they'd let out," Joy said.

"End of the line," Ad Simmons said. "That'll be two dollars from somebody."

Ann Riker handed him two bills. Kathryn struggled in her handbag for change, but the girl from California said, "Square up with me later. Let's get settled first."

They got out, retrieving their luggage from the trunk, and started up the scrubbed white steps of the Administration Building. "'Bye, Ad!" Joy called as he drove away.

"I'm supposed to see Dr. Mildred Matthewson," Kathryn Jackson said. She pronounced it "Matthew-son," and the two sophomores tut-tutted.

"Matheson, Matheson, *Matheson*," Joy Squires said. "And don't you forget it."

"Is she—tough?"

"Only on her mother's side," Joy Squires said. "You'll see."

II

"YOU DRUNKEN swine," Dr. Matthewson said softly.

The old man listed in the Academy catalogue as "Professor James McGivern, B.A., Chairman, Department of Journalism," looked at her in silence for a moment and asked, "Mind if I sit down?" He dropped into a sagging chair beside her desk; it creaked loudly. The chair was as dilapidated as the rest of the office furnishings, as dilapidated as Dr. Mildred Matthewson, Ph.D., Cornell, 1904. She was skinny-ugly and swathed in wrinkles like a mummy.

"I didn't hear you, Mr. McGivern," she snapped. She reached into a mysterious fold of her garments and produced a hearing aid on a grimy pink ribbon, plugged a clear plas-

tic earpiece in and said, "You must make an effort to be understood, Mr. McGivern. It is discourteous to mumble."

McGivern took a deep breath to yell at her, changed his mind and let it out. It was curious, he thought, but he seemed to be acting more and more like a tired old man, like all the tired old men he had known in all the city rooms from San Francisco to Denver to New York and his day of glory. . . .

"I called you," said Dr. Matthewson, "a drunken swine, and so you are. In spite of your whining, lying promises, in spite of your sniveling pleas to be permitted to remain on our faculty, yesterday a certain person saw you on the Mall at approximately half-past eight in the evening drinking from a bottle."

McGivern recalled the incident quite clearly. He had been drinking in his room in Faculty House, he had wanted a breath of air, he had strolled out and once on the Mall had been surprised to notice that the pint bottle of rye was still in his hand. It had seemed the most sensible thing in the world at the time to clear the situation up by emptying the bottle and throwing it away, and so he had.

"It should not be necessary for me to remind you, Mr. McGivern," said Dr. Matthewson, "that your period of service on our faculty has not been sufficient for you to be covered under our pension plan. I think you would not find it easy to secure another appointment at your age, and I think it would be *most* difficult to hold one, considering your bad habits. We are all, unfortunately, aware that, for reasons best known to yourself, you consider it necessary to drink yourself into a sodden stupor night after night. I do not think it too much to ask, even of a piece of human flotsam like you, that you display a minimum of self-control and not affront our young people by sousing yourself outside your room. Do you understand me?"

McGivern said tiredly, "Sure I understand, doctor. Don't think I don't; you're as clear as crystal. You run this dump. You need a few teachers so you hire young punks for peanuts; you need a front so you hire old wrecks who look good in the catalogue. I understand, all right. I get coffee-and-danish and you get the name of a Pulitzer Prize man, the last city editor of the old New York *Globe-Record*. It's a

fair exchange, and don't think you're kidding anybody except the students and their parents who pay the bills. . . ."

But *was* he saying it? No; he was only thinking it. He was not yet to the point of saying it, nor did he know whether he ever would be. He studied Dr. Matthewson's wrinkled neck. He said, aloud, "I'm extremely sorry the incident occurred, Dr. Matthewson." How courtly he had become, like the old men in the city rooms, he who had been a hard-drinking, tough-talking Irish city editor of the old school! The next step would be to find a bat-wing collar like the one Old Man Lassig used to wear on the *Rocky Mountain Post*, which must have been in 1922, because Lassig had died in harness—of course!—two years before the city editorship opened up, and three before the wonderful offer from New York—

Dr. Matthewson was smiling balefully, "Then I assume you wish to continue with us?"

"Naturally, Dr. Matthewson. I find the position congenial." Like an *old*, old man.

"Then let me hear you say so, Mr. McGivern."

He choked and got out the words, slowly. "I wish to apologize for my lapse, Dr. Matthewson. It won't occur again. I hope you'll permit me to remain on the faculty."

"Keep your job, you mean to say, Mr. McGivern?"

"Keep my job. Yes."

"That will be all, Mr. McGivern."

He got up slowly and turned to the door. "Mr. McGivern, you'll find a Dr. Crouch waiting. Please tell him I can see him now."

"I'll tell him, Dr. Matthewson," McGivern said, not looking at her.

Dr. Matthewson found the sheet from the agency in the rubble of her desk and studied it for a moment. A heavy-set man of about forty came in quietly and stood before the desk.

"Dr. Crouch, I presume?"

"Yes. Dr. Matthewson?"

"Pronounced *Matheson*," she corrected him sharply.

"Very well."

"Tell me about yourself. Why do you want to work here?"

He gestured at the employment agency form in her hands. "I gave them all the facts."

"They are curious facts. Why were you fired from Clarion University, Dr. Crouch?"

"I wouldn't say I was fired. My contract was not renewed."

"Do you have bad habits, Dr. Crouch?"

With the ghost of a smile he said, "I sometimes chew a little gum."

She reddened and turned up the dial in the corner of her hearing aid. Menacingly she said, "I did not hear you, Dr. Crouch. You must make an effort to be understood. It is discourteous to mumble. My question was about your habits."

Crouch said, "I don't drink. I don't smoke. I'm not a Don Juan."

With a sudden change of tactics, she beamed at him. "Sit down, please, Dr. Crouch. I'm afraid some people find me forbidding—it's the burden of any administrator. I don't *like* to be caustic, you know. I'm a historian, which must seem to a mathematician like you very little of a scientist. But it has its charm! I'm doing a paper on the old Eleusis Bridge Company, 1886 through 1903. Can you imagine that our dear old elm-shaded town once shipped iron bridges all over the eastern states? But it was so. That, Dr. Crouch, is my dissipation—finding out and recording a more gracious past. Not a very rigorous discipline of scholarship, compared with your stern mathematics! I see you were a bit of a prodigy—high school graduate at sixteen, Bachelor of Arts at nineteen—Harvard, too; I like Harvard—and right on through to your doctorate by twenty-two. And why in the world did you learn Russian?"

"Lot of important mathematics over there. But I've forgotten most of it by now, Dr. Matthewson."

"I see. And then to Clarion University, and a very nice career you had there, Dr. Crouch, until 1945. What happened in 1945, Dr. Crouch?"

"Nothing."

"Do you take me for a fool?" she suddenly shrielled. "You were due for full professorship the next year and suddenly you died in your tracks. You published nothing, you ceased to produce first-rate students. Your contract was not re-

newed. You got an assistant professorship at Southwestern and held it for *five months*. Rogers College, associate professorship, *two semesters*. And after that, the high schools, drifting for eight years from city to city. What happened in 1945, Dr. Crouch?"

He got up and started for the door, then hesitated and turned. In a low, unimpassioned voice he told her, "You don't seem to be satisfied, so I'll leave. First I'd like to say that it wasn't my idea to come here; the agency sent me, on your request, after first checking my record with you. I still feel I can work here if you'll respect my private life. I'd be perfectly satisfied with the substandard salary Eleusis offers, and I imagine you'd be satisfied to have a competent Ph.D. in mathematics on your faculty. I notice from your catalogue that you haven't many."

"Dr. Crouch," said Dr. Matthewson, "I hope I haven't said anything inadvertently to offend you. I have the contract somewhere here—"

She slipped it out from under her desk blotter. Crouch sat down, read its dozen clauses and signed both copies. "There," she said. "That's done. I suppose you'll send for your things from Springfield?"

"I'll be all right, thank you," he said, and put his copy of the contract in a pocket. "Goodbye, Dr. Matthewson."

"Good day, Dr. Crouch. Oh, there's a young man named Galdoni waiting outside. Would you please ask him to step in?"

"Certainly."

The door closed and after a moment Galdoni, very young and very thin, came into the office.

"Yes?" Dr. Matthewson said, raising her brows.

"You sent for me. Dr. Matthewson. About my contract renewal."

She looked thunderstruck. "*Renewal!* My dear Mr. Galdoni!"

"You're not—? I don't understand, Dr. Matthewson! I don't understand this at all! You assured me—and here it is at the beginning of the academic year—"

"Mr. Galdoni," she said kindly, "I'm afraid you've been reading meanings where none were intended. I called you in to offer you my congratulations for two well-spent, construc-

tive semesters and to offer you my best wishes for your future success."

"Thank you, Dr. Matthewson," he floundered, "thank you very much, but I was under the definite impression—it's literally *impossible* to find anything at this time of year, why, I'll be on the rocks for six months! Really, Dr. Matthewson, you *can't*—"

She was frowning and tapping her hearing aid. "These confounded mercury batteries," she said to him, with an engaging smile. "The old ones used to give a person warning, but the mercury batteries just go dead all at once. Now, I wonder whether I have any extra batteries in my desk? Excuse me for just a moment, won't you, Mr. Galdoni?" She searched a drawer and sighed, "Well, it doesn't matter. I'm afraid I'm incommunicado for the rest of the day. I wanted to say, Mr. Galdoni, that of course you may count on me for a *warm* recommendation."

His face tight and desperate, Galdoni took a scratchpad and pencil from his pocket. He wrote rapidly, "Wasn't that man who sent me in Crouch from Clarion U.? Is he replacing me for less money and a better degree?" He hesitated and scratched out the second sentence, turned the pad to Dr. Matthewson.

She read it with pursed lips. "You're mistaken," she said. "The gentleman is Dr. Reeves who will be joining our psychology department."

Galdoni was quite sure he remembered Crouch from a summer math meet at Clarion. "I see," he said, and walked out.

Dr. Matthewson said, "Tut." What confounded bad luck that young Mr. Galdoni should know Dr. Crouch, and that they should meet. Now young Mr. Galdoni would fancy he had a grievance against Eleusis Academy. She liked her young men to leave, if not happily, at least with a vague feeling that they themselves were at fault. However, her hold over young Mr. Galdoni through the much-needed recommendation was quite secure enough to keep him from voicing anything but a discontented mumble. The bold ones who threatened to take it to the American Association of University Professors were few and far between, and she flattered herself that she was a sufficiently good judge of

character to keep the bold ones off her faculty from the start.

Crouch, she admitted, was a bit of a puzzle, but one needs the Ph.D.'s, and a Ph.D. at \$37.50 a week and board was not to be sneezed at! Galdoni was wrong about "less money." Dr. Crouch would, as a matter of fact, draw \$2.50 a week more than the young man.

Mr. Galdoni, presumably, was gone from the waiting room by now and there should be two new girls for her to see. She went to the door and looked out. One of the girls jumped nervously to her feet, so that obviously was Jackson. To the other she said, "Miss Riker, aren't you? Will you come in, please?" And to Jackson, "You may wait."

In her office she said to Miss Riker, "You may smoke if you like, my dear. I'm old, but thank Heaven I'm not old-fashioned. There are worse vices. . . ." She gave the girl from California an amused look from under her eyelids, but Ann Riker did not flinch. Brazen, thought Dr. Matthewson. "Well, my dear, I think you've chosen wisely. Eleusis Academy for Women has graduated many distinguished journalists and women of letters, and from what I am told by your previous school records, you will add to our luster. I want to assure you that my door will always be open to you in case there are any problems you may wish to discuss. And now I see there's a question of tuition."

"If you'll tell me where the bursar's office is—" Ann began.

"The position has been vacant since poor Dr. Bunce died in '37," said Dr. Matthewson. "I've been handling financial details. *Do you have the check?*"

"Right here," Ann said, not bothering to hide a smile. She took it from her handbag and laid it on the desk.

"Thank you, my dear," Dr. Matthewson smiled. "Now, if you have no questions, I'll let you go. And would you please send in the Jackson girl?"

"Surely," Ann said.

Kathryn Jackson was visibly trembling when she came in.

"Miss Jackson," Dr. Matthewson said flatly. "Of—Poole Hollow, isn't it?"

"Yes," the girl said miserably.

"Yes, *Dr. Matthewson.*"

"Yes, Dr. Matthewson. I'm sorry."

"That's better. We'll have none of your nigger-Indian manners here, Miss Jackson. Nor morals. I shall keep my eye on you at all times." Suddenly Dr. Matthewson chuckled. "You know what they say about you people—the only Poole girl over thirteen who's a virgin is one who can run faster than her father."

Kathryn said softly, "I know what they say. I know all the dirty lies they tell about us."

Dr. Matthewson smiled frostily. "I don't care to argue. Do you want the scholarship or don't you?"

"I want it." *Want it more than I have ever wanted anything in my life.*

"Then kindly keep a civil tongue in your head. I called you in to tell you your duty. While you are here, Miss Jackson, you will work at your studies. Any slacking off will come to my attention and will cause me to review your suitability for attending the Academy. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Dr. Matthewson."

"Do you understand that you're here on a scholarship, that you're literally an object of our charity?"

"Yes, Dr. Matthewson."

"Then you're excused, my dear."

Kathryn Jackson went out silently.

III

DR. CROUCH found Room 304 of Faculty House, but there was somebody in it, the young man he'd sent in to Dr. Matthewson's office—Galdoni?

"It's all right," the young man said bitterly. "No mistake, don't apologize. I'm packing."

"I'll wait in the lounge," Dr. Crouch said.

"No," snapped Galdoni. "Sit down. You're Crouch, aren't you? From Clarion?"

"Yes."

"I thought I knew you. The old devil told me you were

somebody-or-other—new psychology teacher. You're replacing me, you know. She gave me absolutely no notice."

"I'm sorry, Dr. Galdoni."

"Not 'doctor,' damn it. 'Mister.' That's why you're replacing me, I suppose. What I'll do for the next six months, God knows. Dig ditches, I guess." The young man was packing as he talked, slamming shirts into his suitcase, scooping up a handful of ties and cramming them into a corner of the bag. "What the hell are you doing in a place like this, Crouch? A man of your ability? Me, it's the old story. You have to start *somewhere*. But you?"

"The agency sent me out. I've been teaching in high schools. I asked them to look for an opening where the schedule wouldn't be so heavy."

"High schools? *You?*"

"That's right. I haven't been at Clarion since '45."

Galdoni started to speak and changed his mind. After a pause he said, "Of course you don't remember me. I was one of the young hopefuls at the State Math Society Conference when it met at Clarion. You spoke on Theory of Primes. Beautiful stuff. I went to your talk just because I had an hour to kill; my interest then was abstract algebras—didn't have the slightest feel for number theory, didn't have any background at all. But I followed you every step of the way. It was brilliant teaching, Crouch. What are you doing now—still number theory?"

"I haven't done any original work for a few years," Crouch said. "I passed the dining hall on the way here. I suppose the food's fair?"

"It's all right," Galdoni said, looking at him. "You mean, you've just stopped *working?*"

"I suppose so. Except for teaching."

Galdoni had stopped packing. "A man like you—" he began, and paused. "I've got to say goodbye to some of the cellmates," he said. "If you like, I'll bring them in so you can meet them."

"Good idea," Crouch said.

While Galdoni was gone Dr. Crouch wandered about the small room, looked into the closet, tried the bedlamp, the sink faucets, the window shade. Then he sat and waited.

Galdoni came back in five minutes with a man as young

as himself whom he introduced as Dr. Jim Henschel of the English Department and an old man named McGivern, head of Journalism.

"Welcome, brother," young Dr. Henschel said a little coldly. "What brings you here?"

"It's better than high schools," Dr. Crouch said.

"Matter of opinion," snapped Galdoni, resuming his packing. "I suppose I'd better start liking high schools, though. I've got a Pennsylvania math certificate; I think my best bet's to head for Philadelphia or Pittsburgh and sign up for substitute assignments. Hammering algebra—beautiful algebra—into the granite heads of teen-age sex fiends."

"Speaking for us sex fiends," Henschel said, "I protest against your tone."

"Jerk," Galdoni said amiably. He turned to Crouch. "This meathead got an offer from U.S.C., I happen to know, and turned it down. It would have interfered with his love-life here at dear old elm-shaded Eleusis. To Dr. Henschel, the most important part about the Eleusis Academy for Women is the women."

"Please," Henschel said. "Woman, not women. I'm true to that gorgeous hunk of blonde from Milford. And if I find out that she isn't coming back this semester, I'm going to kick myself around the Mall three times, go into Dr. Matthewson's office, shove that hearing aid down her throat and jump from the tower."

"Whistling Dixie," Galdoni added, clicking his suitcase shut.

Old McGivern said ceremoniously, "Dr. Crouch, I suppose you had the usual interview with Dr. Matthewson?"

"Excuse me," Dr. Crouch said. "I'll wait in the lounge. I'm very glad to have met you."

He went out as the three men stared.

"Snotty bastard," Henschel said finally.

Galdoni, his face pink with anger, snarled, "He snatched my job away from me. He could at least be polite to his victim."

Old Man McGivern said slowly, "You're both wrong. I've seen that look before." He didn't say where; it would have been fanciful, eccentric. When you're old you guard against the playful remark, or the bizarre judgment you feel in

your bones. What sounds witty or independent from a youngster *might* make people shake their heads behind your back; old McGivern's slipping, beginning to say the strangest things, how old is he anyway? But what you thought of Crouch, whether you dared say it or not, was: He's like a man in a death cell whose appeal was denied, who faces without desperation or hope the end of everything.

Ann Riker said she'd check in at the Lambs House. Kathryn trailed after Joy and Clara to the West Dormitory.

They found Mrs. Ford, the housekeeper, checking linens in the basement laundry. "Three of you?" Mrs. Ford asked. "Wanna room together? The triple on the second floor's vacant. Cudahy got sore at Mason and Winters and moved in with Clemens—207. Mason and Winters got real buddy-buddy and demanded a double. I gave 'em 302."

"Our old room!" Joy snapped.

Clara made vague shushing, what's-it-matter gestures.

Mrs. Ford flared, "Well, young ladies, if you'll excuse the language, how the hell am I supposed to know who comes back and who doesn't? This place is a madhouse from the administrative point of view. I ask Dr. Matthewson to have somebody let me know and she smiles and cackles and I never do find out. I assumed from the way you came in together you knew each other, and we have to fill the triples somehow. If you young ladies had my responsibilities and had to cope with the lack of cooperation I do—"

"The triples are nice rooms," Clara said soothingly to Joy. "And Kathryn's a scholar. And now and then you can use a little help, can't you?"

"Not in Latin," Joy grumbled.

"I'm awfully sorry I'm causing trouble—" Kathryn said breathlessly.

"Oh, stop apologizing," Joy snapped. "I guess the triple's all right. It's nearest the phone, at least."

"And it has its own little bathroom," Mrs. Ford coaxed.

"We'll take it," Joy said, chin up. "Let's have our linen and save you a trip."

"That's very thoughtful of you, Miss Squires," Mrs. Ford said.

As they climbed the stairs Joy complained: "Barbarous. A relic of the dark ages."

But they found that the room was attractive and the bathroom large. It occupied a corner.

Clara said, "That's good. We'll get a breeze right through when we need it along about June."

Joy said thoughtfully, looking down from the window that did not face on the Mall, "You know, an active girl could shinny up and down those brick doodads without too much trouble. And with the dear old Science Building next door, no chance of being seen at night."

"No," Clara groaned. "Not another semester of your crumby little intrigue with Dr. Henschel!"

"Why not, dear?" Joy asked smugly.

Kathryn was startled enough to ask, "*Doctor* Henschel?"

"Sure," Joy said. "English professor. Young, handsome, virile—not that he's proved it to me, but he shows every sign of wanting to—and lots of fun. Faculty members are human, Kathryn. Didn't you know?"

Kathryn thought back to high school. Yes; she knew quite well that faculty members were all too human. She and her like were considered fair game by the younger male teachers as long as it was kept quiet. The young male teachers were very proper and correct with the town girls, but when you came from Poole Hollow you saw a look in their eye and heard an insinuation in their voice that the town girls did not. Despite veiled threats of failure and lowered grades she had never gone out with one of them, which was more than she could say for some other girls from the Hollow. They knew they were fair game; they accepted the rules apathetically; they were from the Hollow.

Ann Riker walked into the Lambs House coolly appraising. The duty girl at the desk brightly asked if she could help her.

"I'm Ann Riker. Senior. I'm a transfer from College of the Pacific. I'm a Lamb and I'd like to room in the House."

"I'll get the Regent," the girl said, surprised. She ran up the handsome staircase. Ann sat and lit a cigarette with a gold lighter. It was a nice house they had, she thought absently. Nice big parlor with a good oversize Gullistan, plenty

of decent chairs and a fine long credenza on which, doubtless, the innocent punchbowl shone for festive occasions.

The duty girl came down the stairs with a tall brunette in white linen. Ann Riker stood up and gave her the secret handshake of the Lambs. While the duty girl tactfully returned to her desk they exchanged three cryptic sentences—challenge, sign and countersign of the sorority—grinning over their naivete, their girlish prewar idealism.

"That's that," the tall girl said briskly. "I'm Lucille Conyers, and you are an unexpected pleasure. Shouldn't the chapter at Pacific have sent us a note?"

"I suppose so," Ann said. "You can check with them when you've time. I hope I'm not inconveniencing you people?"

"Of course not. We're all sisters, it says in the Statute. But you're not a member of the chapter—at least not yet—so I don't quite know what to do about housing you. I suppose you belong in one of the guest rooms, at least until you're initiated—if you have to be initiated. I've got to look up all this in the Statute, Ann. I've never handled a transfer before. It's my impression that you can be accepted as a chapter member at the First Meeting—that's in about a week. If you wouldn't mind a week in a guest room—they're quite nice. And, ah—"

"How much?" Ann asked, to the Regent's relief.

"We charge alumni ten dollars a day, but if you're staying a week let's call it fifty. Of course, the members' rooms are more reasonable—just pay the girl at the desk. Virginia, do you have the receipt book?"

The duty girl found the receipt book in a drawer, filled one out and handed the top copy to Ann.

Lucille Conyers' faint air of tension disappeared as the girl from California took a fifty-dollar bill from a crammed wallet and dropped it on the desk. "Come on upstairs," she said. "I'll show you the room. What do your people do?"

"They're in iron and steel," Ann said. "My mother irons and my father steals."

The Regent laughed dutifully. "Are they really in iron and steel?" she asked.

"I'm an orphan," Ann said. "One of those trustee brats. It was an auto accident when I was fourteen. Since then the Bank of California has been watching over me. There's an

aunt who's the guardian of record, but I've been pretty independent. The money's from shipping."

Lucille Conyers was impressed. "My father has great respect for shipowners," she said. "He says it's the only way left in America to earn money and keep your dignity."

"My father's dignity used to fly to pieces quite often, especially when Harry Bridges got into the conversation."

"Oh," the Regent said. "Well, with us it's the C.I.O. in general and the United Steel Workers in particular. It's a good idea to avoid the subject around here, Ann. Most of our girls are from Scranton and Wilkes-Barre."

"I understand. What a lovely room!"

"It is nice, isn't it? We try to keep them pleasant for the alumnae."

Ann Riker drifted about the sunny room from chair to table to couch. "I met some nice girls in the taxi," she said. "Clara Gwynn, Joy Squires and Kathryn Jackson."

"I don't know Jackson," the Regent said. "Frosh?"

"Frosh and scholarship."

The Regent made a face. "Clara really ought to be a Lamb," she said. "Her people are lovely—Gwynn Coal and Iron, Scranton. Somehow it just didn't come off last year. But I think some of the sisters aren't coming back this spring, and maybe we'll get her yet. Squires—well, no. Her mother was a Lesoeur but she married some rich nobody from Connecticut and divorced him when Joy was born and they've been in Connecticut ever since, but her mother sent her here because she went here herself. Her mother was a DXK, so thank Heaven we didn't *have* to pledge little Joy."

"She's a stunning girl, though."

"And if you don't believe it, ask her," Lucille said, a trifle spitefully.

"Oh, she needs guidance, Heaven knows," Ann laughed. "But I think she's quality."

Lucille looked doubtful. "Are your things at the station?" she asked.

"I suppose so. I'll call for them later."

"Then I'll let you get settled. Lunch at 12:30, dinner at 7:30 in the Refectory. I'll see you, Ann."

"Thanks for everything, Lucille."

The door closed. Ann kicked her shoes off, lit a cigarette and lay back on the couch.

She was in, but she would have to be careful. The wild threat back in Obispo from one of the girls, the threat to write every LLL chapter in the country, had obviously not been carried out. There had been a faction that considered her a confused kid who deserved another chance, and obviously that faction had won out.

She would have to watch out for Lucille Conyers, who was stupid, dogmatic and inflexible. She would have to spin her web with care, winning over the key Lambs and neutralizing the unimportant ones. She would have to beware of enemies, as always. Genius and beauty like hers were always envied by the small-minded.

IV

THEIR THINGS had arrived from the station when they came back from dinner in the Refectory. Joy and Clara each had a steamer trunk; Kathryn's luggage was a foot locker. G.I. Joe's Surplus Store, she thought. A dollar eighty-five. The olive-drab paint was scuffed; the plated brass corner reinforcements and lock were rusting. And the steamer trunks gleamed of butter-soft leather, unmarred. They were stacked in the lobby and Mrs. Ford called around on the campus telephone exchange trying to find the handyman.

"Couldn't you girls wait until morning?" she finally asked.

"Of course," Clara said, and Kathryn nodded. Joy looked stubborn and said, "Would you please keep trying, Mrs. Ford?"

The woman snapped, "It isn't as if they won't be safe with the locks turned, and it isn't as if you're going anywhere tonight, Miss Squires."

"Nevertheless I prefer to have my things with me, if you don't mind," Joy said icily. "I'm sure you can find Henry if you keep trying. I'm going upstairs."

When they were in the room Clara complained, "Are you trying to get us all off on the wrong foot, Joy? For Heaven's sake, what difference does it make if our things get up to-night or tomorrow?"

"It does to me," Joy caroled, floating into the bathroom. "I have a date, young ladies."

"Already? Oh—I get it. Henschel. I saw you talking to him at the faculty table."

"What could I do?" Joy called from the bathroom. "He twisted my arm."

"I'll bet. You know it's against rules, of course."

Over the noise of running bathwater Joy called, "Jim has a mind like a steel trap. As soon as I told him we were in the second-floor triple, the great brain flashed into action. Down the brick doodads, short rest at the cornice, down the rest of them, quick sneak between the dormitory and the Science Building to the delivery driveway, rendezvous with him at the corner, proceed to the delivery entrance, duck under the chain and there is his powder-blue last-year's Chevvie convertible. And so off to a mad night of revelry amid the fleshpots of Eleusis, P-A. Safe as houses."

Through the half-open door came a whoop, "Man on first! Coming upstairs!" Half-dressed girls could be seen scuttling down the corridor; doors slammed along the hall. Kathryn saw a naked arm reach from the tub and push the bathroom door shut.

There was a knock on their own door; Clara heaved herself from a chair to pull down her skirt and call, "Come in."

It was a wrinkled Negro in overalls; he was easily carrying Kathryn's foot locker on one shoulder.

"Hello, Henry," Clara said. And to Kathryn, "Where do you want it?"

"Uh—anywhere, I suppose."

"Anywhere, Henry, but that's Miss Jackson's bed."

The handyman neatly placed it at the foot of the bed. "I wish they was all that size," he grinned. "Be back with yours next, Miss Gwynn."

"Take it easy, Henry."

In two more trips, staggering and puffing, he brought the steamer trunks and upended them in corners of the room. Clara gave him three dollars, to Kathryn's alarm. She was

about to ask what her share would be—surely it couldn't be a dollar; her foot locker didn't weigh a quarter as much as the other things—when Joy called from the bathroom, "One of you kids pass me my dressing gown; it's in the overnighter."

That was the small suitcase she had carried herself—beautiful airplane luggage with a famous name on a plate discreetly under the handle. Kathryn hesitated, but Clara was sunk in her chair again. Kathryn unsnapped the overnighter and found the gown, a folded handful of electric blue silk surah that opened into a sweeping robe. It was too beautiful even to envy; it was too far beyond her to think that it might be hers.

She passed the robe to Joy in the tub and went back into the large room to unpack. Clara had found a digest magazine and was sprawled in the chair lackadaisically turning the pages while Kathryn stowed stockings, underwear, handkerchiefs, sweater, skirts, and her meager supply of cosmetics.

It was soon finished. Joy swept out in the blue robe and swung open her trunk, put her overnighter on the bed beside the one dressing table and methodically began to set out bottles, jars, pots, tubes, brushes, pencils. When they were laid out she stood back and inspected them with the eye of a brigadier general reviewing his troops.

Evidently they passed inspection. She turned to Kathryn and said without apology or qualification: "Clara knows my little ways and you don't yet, so I'll tell you. If you're short, I'll lend you five until the letter comes. If an assignment needs typing and you're jammed up, I'll do it if I possibly can. Etcetera. But don't use my things. Don't even ask if you can use them. I need them, every one of them, and when I want them I expect them to be there. Understand?"

"Yes," Kathryn said. And she believed she did. This was a person guarding the tools of her profession, the things with which she would rise and shine in the world. There could be no compromise about them whatever. The carefree, customary swapping and borrowing of cosmetics was not for Joy Squires, no more than a soldier on the firing line loaned his gun. You couldn't resent it.

Kathryn watched her make up before the mirror, almost open-mouthed. Fresh from the bath, she had good skin and

a rather round face. Vapor-thin layer after layer of foundation was delicately smoothed on; before her eyes Kathryn saw the good skin turn perfect and the roundish face turn delicately oval; the slightly fleshy cheeks hollowed fashionably under a touch of darker cream. Negligible blonde eyebrows darkened and arched dramatically.

Dr. Matthewson was munching huckleberry pie—she had slipped a wedge of it, wrapped in a paper napkin, into her pocket while inspecting the kitchen after dinner—when she noticed the time. The real estate gentleman would arrive shortly. She gulped down the tough crust of the rim, choked briefly, spat into the paper napkin and wadded it into her pocket.

Dr. Matthewson's apartment, four rooms on the top floor of the Administration Building, resembled the woman herself. It was dusty and unkempt; she did not permit a cleaning woman to do the place unless she could stand guard, and she seldom had the time. When she did, she was constantly descending on the woman with shrieks of warning as a duster flicked too close to a precariously piled stack of historical society journals or a broom darted too near the Governor Bradford chair—a clumsy four-square wreck supposed to have come over on the *Mayflower*. In 1926 all the Academy buildings had been rewired with baseboard electrical outlets—except Dr. Matthewson's apartment. From the center of each room's ceiling descended a twisted wire which had formerly ended in a lighting fixture and ended now in a double or triple receptacle. From these, more wires snaked to gooseneck lamps, bridge lamps, electric fans, heaters, toasters, hotplates, dividing and subdividing by way of brass light sockets with pull chains into which were screwed more double and triple receptacles. To light a given gooseneck lamp it was necessary to snap its button, backtrack along its twisted wire, pulling socket chains, and finally to snap the wall switch that turned on the current to the ceiling wire.

The rooms were mazes; narrow aisles wound between desks with cluttered tops, jammed glass-fronted bookcases, rickety card tables covered with newspaper clippings, magazines, shears, paste pots. Between one room and another were dusty red plush portieres, edged with ball fringe. There was

hardly a square foot of wall without its picture, and these ranged from steel engravings of the eighteenth century philosophers to Dr. Matthewson's ancestral portraits; from architects' renderings of the Academy as it was to grandiose plans drawn on speculation for its future enlargement.

The twist-bell in the door to the apartment rattled. Dr. Matthewson grinned, settled down at a card table and began to clip a stack of local newspapers for items of historic interest.

The young man outside the apartment door, Wilbert Cowley, junior member of the real estate firm of Reed, Gresham, Cowley & Son, stopped twisting the handle and waited. After his eyes grew used to the dim light from an overhead 40-watt bulb he began to make out a series of notes printed on index cards tacked to the door. The topmost said PLEASE RING HARD AND WAIT. The next said IF NO REPLY PLEASE KNOCK. The third said IF NO REPLY TO KNOCK PLEASE ENTER AND RING HANDBELL. While Dr. Matthewson inside grinned in growing enjoyment Wilbert Cowley, in growing embarrassment, rang and waited, knocked and waited, and finally tried the door. It opened, and across the room in a pool of light from a gooseneck lamp he could see the old lady bent at her work, ignoring him. An enormous brass dinnerbell on a tabouret by the door caught his eye; he supposed that was the handbell of the notice. He coughed and was ignored. He picked up the bell and swung it cautiously; it bellowed like a fire alarm before he could clap his free hand on it and still the clangor.

"Is somebody there?" Matthewson asked shrilly, looking up and peering. "Who's there?"

"Wilbert Cowley," he shouted.

"Cowley," she said gently. "Cowley." She threw her head back and smiled. Files opened in her mind. "I knew your grandfather, young man, your *maternal* grandfather Asa Wilbert. *He* was an old settler. The Wilberts trace their descent from Isaac Wilbert, 'Major Wilbert' as he is called in the earliest documents relating to Eleusis, which of course was known in those days as Sullivan's Fort."

"That's very interesting," Wilbert Cowley said helplessly.

She went on, "And that is why I have always been wary of the Wilberts in any commercial transaction."

The young man said, "I don't quite follow—uh—"

Dr. Matthewson said, "There's a streak of deceitfulness in them. 'Major Wilbert' indeed! In '27 I found the opportunity to examine the muster rolls and order book of the Clinton Expedition of 1778 and discovered that the so-called major had actually been a corporal. Confirmation: Isaac Wilbert is well known to have journeyed down-river in 1789 to Pittsburgh on a trading venture. There was then in Pittsburgh a flourishing chapter of the Society of the Cincinnati, the organization of former officers of the Continental Army. I have minutely examined their records and find no reference to the so-called major for that year or any year. Evidently he was well aware that his imposture, successfully carried off in the backwoods isolation of Sullivan's Fort, would be detected had he attempted to practice it in sophisticated Pittsburgh."

"That's very interesting," the young man said. "Now about those two lots adjoining the Morgan property—"

"I know little of the Cowleys," she said. "Your paternal grandfather Henry G. settled in Eleusis after the railroad came through, bringing with it all sorts of riff-raff. He married above his station, even though his wife bore the Wilbert taint of perjury and deceit."

"About the Morgan property, now—" Wilbert Cowley began.

"Forewarned is forearmed," she grinned at him, wagging a bony finger. "None of your tricks on an unworldly scholar, young man!"

"No tricks," he said hastily. "No tricks at all. Now, shall I review the situation? Our client Mr. Morgan wants those two lots of yours to extend his side lawn. You said you'd write your cousin and discuss the price with her. What's been decided, Dr. Matthewson?"

"The poor woman's ill," Dr. Matthewson said. "Alone in Omaha, struck down by a cardiac condition."

"You haven't written her?"

"Oh, yes. She left the matter entirely in my hands. 'Whatever you decide, Mildred,' were her words."

"And what *have* you decided?" asked the young man, exasperated.

"Fifteen hundred dollars."

Wilbert Cowley shouted in spite of himself. "*Seven hundred and fifty apiece for those bramble patches? Absolutely not!*"

"No," she said composedly. "Fifteen hundred dollars apiece for them. The total is three thousand dollars, Mr. Cowley."

"Look," he said. "Please—look. Lots that size, unimproved, way to hell and gone—excuse me—way on the edge of town—they just don't *sell* for that kind of money. Take six hundred dollars, Dr. Matthewson—for both of them—and you'll have a nice profit. Sure, Mr. Morgan wants a bigger side lawn, but he's not crazy."

"Of course not," she beamed. "Mr. Cowley, do you know our Henry?"

"No," he said distractedly. "Six hundred dollars is a lot of—"

"Our Henry," she said, "is a treasure. Young as you are, you may never have known a Negro domestic of the old type—faithful, gentle, biddable, lovable. I sum it up when I tell you that our Henry is *proud* to be called a 'darky.'"

"I'm sure he is," said the young man. "Now, six hundred—"

She tittered. "Of course he has a large family. Don't they all? Like the beasts of the field. I'm sure I don't know why Negresses don't have *litters*. Eleven children, or is it twelve? There were the twins, but one of them passed on—it's eleven, and the poor fellow has a struggle keeping all those little tummies filled, you may be sure."

"Dr. Matthewson," the young man asked, "does Henry have anything to do with the lots?" He was suddenly sure he did.

"Indirectly," Dr. Matthewson said airily. "Indirectly, Mr. Cowley. It crossed my mind one day that Henry might be well advised to buy perhaps half a dozen piglets in the spring—or even this time of year, as a matter of fact—and feed them through the year and butcher them the following winter. You know how the darkies love pork jowl and chops and trotters. He might feed them on the garbage from the kitchen here at only the cost of hauling, and he has a little old Ford truck."

"Dr. Matthewson," said the young man, "were you by

any chance thinking of these pigs being located on your lots adjoining the Morgan place?"

She beamed again. "As a matter of fact, I was. It would be quite convenient for Henry, since it lies on the road between the Academy and his place. He could run up a hogpen and feed them each evening on his way home. Don't you think that would be handy, Mr. Wilbert Cowley?"

"There must be a zoning law," the young man said flatly.

She tittered. "I've had my dear old friend Judge Homrighouse—he's Pennsylvania Dutch, not an old settler but a most distinguished gentleman in spite of that—I say, I've had the judge look it up. No, Mr. Wilbert Cowley, there is no zoning beyond Broad Street Extension."

"We'll get an injunction," Cowley said uncertainly. "You can't deliberately interfere with a man's enjoyment of his home by running up a hogpen next door."

"Of course," she smiled, "you and Mr. Rogers—or was it Morgan?—are perfectly free to attempt to secure an injunction against me from my old friend the judge. But you may find that we old-timers have a certain solidarity in the face of the upstarts and riff-raff who've flooded into our dear old elm-shaded Eleusis." Her eyes narrowed menacingly. It was time to move into the attack. "And the Academy has what you would vulgarly call 'connections,' Mr. Cowley. Have you forgotten that the president of our Board of Governors is Dr. Anson, of the Anson Clinic? Dr. Anson will not take kindly to the news that an elderly scholar is being intimidated and bullied by a representative of the coarse new element in town. Dr. Anson is a power in Harrisburg; and may very well have a friend or two in the Real Estate License Board. Did you think of that, young Mr. Wilbert Cowley, before you came swaggering in with your threats of a ruinous legal action?"

"I wasn't threatening you!" he said doggedly. "It's perfectly legitimate to resort to law in a dispute about property use, Dr. Matthewson! But I assure you that if you feel so strongly about it we won't—"

"Three thousand dollars," she said grimly. "And the sum is poor compensation for my lots plus the strain of this most unpleasant interview."

His one thought was escape. "Naturally I'm only a go-

between," he said, edging toward the door. "However, I'll speak to Mr. Morgan—"

"I shall take that as a promise," she shrilled at him as he stumbled through the shadows. "A promise, do you understand, Mr. Wilbert Cowley?"

When the door closed behind the young man Dr. Matthewson snickered briefly. The negotiations, she thought, had opened on a promising note. She returned to her work, which happened to be an article on the Ladies' Arboreal Beautification Subscription of 1823-25, through whose efforts the saplings had been planted which grew into the stately elms now shading the streets of Eleusis.

Dr. Jim Henschel was visiting in McGivern's room. The old man took a look at the red leather traveling clock on his pine bureau. It was 8:00 P.M. exactly. He took a pint bottle of inexpensive rye from among the undershirts in the bureau's top drawer, opened a good penknife, slit the plastic wrapping around the neck. He filled a pitcher at the corner sink, letting the water run, and hesitated over a small array of glassware on the shelf above the sink.

"Care to join me, Jim?" he asked Dr. Henschel.

"No thanks, McGivern. Big night ahead. I'll be beering up with the flower of Milford, Connecticut."

The old man took one shot glass and one tumbler down. "Oh? So soon?" He steadily poured the shot glass to the brim, lit a cigarette, stared at the whisky and tossed it down. Gulp of water; drag of smoke.

"Couldn't help it, McGivern. The poor thing pleaded with me. What can a man do?"

Suddenly acid, McGivern said, "He can act like a man instead of a lovesick adolescent. I heard about that appointment you turned down. I blushed for you. We were tougher in my day."

Jim Henschel fought down anger. "Sorry you disapprove," he said. "Things were simpler in your day, Mac."

"It was a man's world," McGivern said. "You fought for a job you loved, you worked at it until you dropped from weariness, if you were good you got your raises and your promotions. No union scale, no seniority raises, no pensions if you were too stupid to save for your old age, no un-

employment pay if you weren't man enough to hold your job."

"And no hydrogen bomb," Henschel said lightly.

McGivern had another drink, fast but smooth. Shot, gulp, puff. For perhaps the 150,000th time, he absently surmised. What had Henschel said? "Hydrogen bomb. Well, you have a good one there, Jim. A dandy excuse for irresponsibility, for not using your talent to the full."

The anger was rising again, harder this time. "McGivern," Jim Henschel said, "please don't be a quarrelsome drunk. I dropped in for some chit-chat because usually we both enjoy it, and shortly I hope to leave for a pleasant inexpensive evening with a beautiful girl who excites me very much. Can't we let it go at that?"

The old man looked sour at the word "drunk" and made an effort. "Sorry," he said. "I, of all people, should be the last one to talk about irresponsibility. You pay your money and you take your choice. So I was told by the young man who in 1923 cased Judge McCavity in cement and dropped him off a rum-boat near Montauk. The trouble was, Judge McCavity first took his choice, and it was a juicy probate judgeship, and then thought he didn't have to pay the money. He was a fool; it was only \$100,000 and he could have grafted it back in two years—one, if he'd been willing to take chances and cut corners. As I was saying, Jim," he grinned, "times have changed. In those days politics was *politics*."

Henschel laughed delightedly. That was what the old boy was good at; he was a living museum of the simple, golden teens and twenties of the century that might have no end but flame and fission. "I hope you put that one in the book," he said.

McGivern shrugged. "Everybody in New York knew it was murder because he didn't pay off for the nomination. A lot of people knew sooner or later that it was a cement-overcoat job. Not too many could have known when and where it happened, and I just might be the only person outside the mob who was told by the killer all the details. Yes; I suppose it does belong in the book. The Judge McCavity Mystery. Mystery! Only in the headlines. The word had to be passed around, of course, because the judge was killed as

an example in case any future nominees got ideas. If it stayed a mystery the boys would have been wasting their time. And cement."

"I'm going now, Mac," said the young man. "Look, why don't you put it down just the way you told me while it's still fresh?"

"Good idea," McGivern said, very pleased with himself and pleasant young Jim Henschel. "Have fun."

"I will," said Henschel, and let himself out.

The old man opened the bulky leather loose-leaf book, whipped the cover off his ancient typewriter and rolled a sheet of cypaper into it. Now he had to have a lead, the all-important thing in journalism, the first sentence that grabbed the reader and shook him like a rat. *Full fathoms five*, he typed, *the famous Judge McCavity lies off Montauk Point, Long Island, snugly encased in cement; he broke the first commandment of the underworld, which runs: "Thou shalt not welsh."*

He leaned back a little, well pleased. The sentence had a curling roll to it and a nice little pop at the end. All things considered, he would have a drink on that sentence.

He did, and felt his heart begin to thud as soon as the inexpensive rye hit his stomach. He sat down in the easy chair, sat absolutely still, deliberately relaxed his muscles. The thudding in his chest eased slowly. It came with fewer and fewer drinks this year. All things considered, he had better wait a good half hour before his next, and spend the time profitably rereading the manuscript of his memoirs. They were sketchy, hardly more than fragments, but each episode kicked off with a good strong lead. As yet, he decided, it wasn't anything you could call a *book*. In some discouraged moments he thought it no better than a rag-bag of notes, but not tonight. Tonight he saw clearly that everything really interesting from his long and busy life was there in outline at least, and one day he'd methodically begin to collect and order the notes, writing bridges of narration, pulling everything together so it would come clear and strong . . . he glanced at the clock and saw that only five minutes had passed.

There is not one saloon in the great commonwealth of

Pennsylvania. There are, however, hotels which an inexperienced eye can hardly tell from saloons. It was to one of these hotels, two miles outside of town on the state highway, that Jim Henschel drove Joy Squires in his last-year's convertible. There was a lobby big enough for two chairs, there was a registration desk with a few keys hanging behind it in a rack and an aged register lying open. Off to the right was the door to the hotel restaurant which had a long mahogany bar, a juke box and tables, and a kitchen consisting of an ice box and a two-burner gas plate. The man carried on the payroll as chef would make you a cheese sandwich or even fry you a hamburger if you insisted and if he could take the time from drawing beer and pouring rye.

Henschel led Joy to a table as far as possible from the blaring juke box. She sank into her chair with a graceful swirl of skirts. "Lovely crowd here tonight," she commented. "The flower and chivalry of the Lackawanna car shops."

"Diamonds in the rough," Henschel said, studying the lineup at the bar. Most of them were in work clothes, fresh from the second shift at the shops a mile away. When the roar of the juke paused briefly between phrases of *The Yellow Rose of Texas*, you could hear the drinkers laughing and talking jobs and baseball. A few had their wives and girls along, and the ladies giggled and drank boilermakers with their little fingers extended. Henschel and Joy were not the only couple at a table; there was another pair at the table nearest the door, middle-aged and obviously engaged in a bitter, whispered, half-drunken quarrel. As Henschel was waving for the waitress the quarrel exploded; the middle-aged woman yelled an obscenity, threw her drink—a whisky sour, perhaps, in a tulip glass—into the man's face and ran sobbing from the bar.

The man mopped his face and swore, and Joy snapped, "I hate these dingy little places."

"Sorry," Henschel said. "I hoped you'd find it cute. Shall we go on up the line to the Forrest House?"

"Take too long," she said peevishly. "Here comes the girl. I want a bottle of Danish beer."

"I don't think—" he began, and subsided. Joy was in a Mood.

The waitress confirmed his suspicion that there was no

Danish beer to be had and came back with two bottles of Milwaukee. Joy sipped hers and made a face. Henschel thought dismally, God, God, here we go again. And brightly, aloud, "You're looking lovely, Joy. We haven't had a chance to talk. How was the summer?"

She melted into a smile. "Dreadful. I'm so tired of the crew-cut bunch back home. Jim, you weren't *dreary* when you were an adolescent, were you? I'd hate to think that."

"I must have been," he said regretfully. "Didn't I ever tell you I was an Eagle Scout?"

Joy exploded with musical laughter. "You're joking!"

He said, "Honest Injun. It didn't seem funny at the time."

"An Eagle Scout. From eagle to wolf in—how many years, Jim?"

He didn't think that was particularly funny. He grinned mechanically and told her, "I'm a ripe twenty-nine. I thought you knew. Anyway, I dropped Scouting when I entered State."

She sipped beer. "You know, I've been wondering if I oughtn't to have gone to a bigger school. I'll be looking for a job in a couple of years, and what's a diploma from this place worth, for Heaven's sake?"

Her and her goddam job. Her and her career. Her and her three-window office on Madison Avenue that she thought she was going to get in spite of the fact, obvious to everybody except her, that she lacked brains, talent and the ability to work hard at anything except being a very beautiful girl. He felt sick, as he always did, at the prospect of another conversational round with her Career. But here it came. "I don't really know whether to try advertising or publishing, Jim. Publishing's safe and respectable, but *stuffy*. Advertising's wild and free-swinging, still being formed—it would be like being a pioneer, don't you think?"

Well, he could stand to kick it around for a while. "You're asking for trouble, you know. Publishing and advertising are just about the hardest fields to break into there are."

She smiled meltingly. "I think I have certain advantages over the average applicant, Jim. Don't you agree?"

He thought fleetingly of the old story about the boss who had to choose between a secretary who was dumb, a secre-

tary who was average and a secretary who was over-bright. Which one did he pick? The blue-eyed blonde with the big bust, of course. He said, "I agree. A grubby little over-brained girl from Hunter wouldn't have a chance against you, Joy. But—but—" Hell! Why not talk turkey?

"Look," he said, "why *bother* with a job? You know damn well your calling in life is to be beautiful, get married and make some man very, very happy?" He did not add that the man would have to have a great deal of money, or Joy would make him very, very miserable until he acquired it.

She said soberly, "That's what I'll be best at, of course. But I don't want to rush into it. Everybody gets married so young nowadays and starts having children as if they were in some kind of *contest*, for Heaven's sake. Girls I went to high school with have two kids now, Jim! I think it's disgusting. I want to be more than an incubator."

He patted her knee under the table. "You'll be the loveliest incubator in Westchester County. That's where the ad men buy houses when they marry and settle down, isn't it?"

"The big ones," she said. "The account executives and policy level men. Jim, take your hand off my leg and stop looking at me as if I were a leper."

"Sorry," he said. He had not realized his expression was exposing him so completely.

"I know what's on your mind," she said, not complaining or angry, just stating it. "I'm supposed to be a bitch for not marrying a struggling kid and struggling right along with him for years and years and years until he can afford Westchester. You think I'm a prostitute because I'm going to set my sights for a man who's made his pile. Why, Jim? Why is everybody supposed to have a quota of struggle and misery? I've got looks and I work hard at them—you don't know how hard—and if I can use them to bypass the struggle and misery, why shouldn't I?"

"No answer to that," he shrugged. "It's a time-honored custom."

She upended her glass and finished the beer. "Let's go," she said. "The train ride was awful; I'm tireder than I thought. And classes tomorrow."

V

ELEUSIS. Dr. Crouch droned through his set speech and considered Eleusis Academy for Women. The room was a let-down, all things considered, though perhaps it wouldn't have smelled so musty if it hadn't begun to rain in the night. And Matthewson was clearly a harpy. Still, he thought comfortably as the great names of mathematics dropped from his lips, in the essentials the job didn't look bad. He approved of the size of the class—not so few that they would consider themselves entitled to individual treatment, not so many that they would be hard to handle. So thought the man whose paper on Euler's theta-function in 1941 had been reprinted by *Scripta Mathematica* and translated into eight languages.

“... presume that most of you have completed the standard high-school courses in algebra,” he said, watching the rain outside the window. “If by any chance you haven't, it hardly matters—calculus is no more like algebra than algebra is like geometry.” And that was true enough, he reflected; it hardly mattered. Not for the girls who were killing time until they could find themselves husbands. Not for the handful of mechanically attentive scholarship girls, the high-school teachers of the next generation in Pottstown and Erie and Catasauqua. Not for anyone at all who was likely to elect mathematics at that select finishing school for our future mothers, Madam Matthewson's Womb Works.

In the essentials, he thought again, the job didn't look bad at all. He doubted that there would be five questions a semester that couldn't be answered by giving the proper page number in the book. Which shows how wrong even a math Ph.D. can be.

Clara Gwynn was hungrily remembering two strips of bacon and an ounce of watery cream that her new diet had limited her breakfast to. But it was going to be worth it.

Look at Joy. After the long train ride and the evening with Jim Henschel and the shinnying up and down the walls she finally gets back to the room, and what does she do? The hair, put up just so, as though the next day were the semi-finals in the Miss Universe contest instead of the first day of classes in a dreary school. The skin cream. The ritual of the bath. The meticulous minutes with the tweezers and the emory board. Oh, it was worth it, all right, if it made you look like Joy Squires; and if the first step was to pass up a few calories and take off a few pounds—well, you had to start somewhere.

And there was posture, too. She conscientiously straightened her shoulders and spine and tried to concentrate on what this man was blathering about that was called calculus. He had been very confusing indeed with names like Leibniz and Fermat and, for heaven's sake, *Newton*—what was Newton doing out of his apple orchard with this thing called calculus? Now he was being equally confusing with differentials and ratios and integrations. Of course, Clara reassured herself, the confusion would straighten out; sooner or later he would stop *explaining* and start *doing*, and once the teachers passed from theory to practice, she recalled from all her previous years of classes, they began to be easy to follow. All the same, maybe this was a mistake. If she was really ever going to do anything about accreditation for English teaching, it would have been better to elect psych instead. . . . She remembered, and straightened her spine again.

With a dusty sigh, Dr. Crouch turned to the blackboard and began to write, and Clara stopped speculating about what would be for lunch.

What was for lunch turned out to be some sort of fish in a limp salad, and plenty of milk from the Academy's own pasteurizer. In theory, it was a splendidly nutritious warm-weather meal; but even in theory it wasn't much for a rainy autumn day in the Pennsylvania hills.

Joy said, "I wish that Ann Riker really would get us into the Lambs. Catch them eating slop like this! And, you know, I think she just might try. I saw her between classes and she said something—"

"That's nice," said Kathryn Jackson politely. Nice for you, anyway, she thought.

Joy said, "Clara! You're barely picking at your food and you aren't listening to a word I say. Is dieting that much of a strain on you?"

Clara said abstractedly, "I'm sorry, Joy." She took an energetic couple of forkfuls of the salad, and then went back to frowning at space.

Joy shook her head. "She isn't in love, I know that," she told Kathryn. "Or at least, she wasn't last night, and God knows there's nothing much around here to get her all— Oh, hello, Avis."

A blonde girl with very much the same facial structure as Joy sat down next to them. "Avis Lesoeur, Kathryn Jackson. You remember Clara, don't you? Be patient, she may eventually look your way; she's in a fog about something. Oh, say—" she glanced at Kathryn quickly—"maybe you two know each other? Avis is from near Montrose. She's my cousin, the side of the family that stayed in Pennsylvania."

Kathryn managed to smile. "I don't think we've met," she said, waiting for the string to break and the sword to fall—but why did it have to be on the very first day.

But Avis only nodded; apparently the name rang no bells. Well, that in itself was not astonishing. Joy hadn't mentioned Poole Hollow, which would have been the tip off, and anyway Poole Hollow was a long way from Montrose, the county seat; it wasn't very likely that Avis would know any more about the Pooles than the bare name and reputation. *Near Montrose*. Kathryn remembered what *near Montrose* meant; she had driven past the private roads that led to the big, plushy estates no more than a week before, as it happened, driving her stepfather back from the county courthouse.

Suddenly, Clara came to life. "Avis," she said suddenly, "didn't you take calculus last year?" It was a rhetorical question; it was partly Avis's description of it as a snap course that had induced Clara to give it a try. "Run through it for me once," she begged. "What does 'differentiate' mean?"

Avis said grimly, "If you think I ever said I knew that, you weren't listening when I talked. What I said was that

any girl who was certifiably female and wanted to work at it could pass the course while *Mister* Galdoni was teaching it. All you had to do was linger after class one day to ask him a couple of questions, and from then on it was just a matter of keeping his hopes up and your dress down until the end of the semester. But that was Galdoni. This new man Crouch, I don't know; I had a look at him and it's my personal theory that he isn't interested. In fact, if you want to know, it's my personal theory that he's dead and they just haven't decided where to ship the remains."

But by then Clara wasn't even listening any more.

All the same, she did linger after the Thursday class to ask a couple of questions of Dr. Crouch.

It wasn't that she *liked* calculus; it was that something was vaguely bothering her about it. She couldn't ignore it and she couldn't make it stop.

She had spent a whole evening, that she had planned to set aside for a really thorough job of working on her hair and complexion, worrying as far through the textbook as she could go. That wasn't very far, but she had angrily plowed on past the point where the sparsely printed pages, full of swirly signs and symbols, had been fully intelligible, and even when she couldn't so much as pronounce what she was reading, it had seemed to *signify* something. Only Joy's complaints about the light in her eyes had made her at last close the book and go, puzzled and a little belligerent, to bed.

Of course, the textbook was meant for teaching, not reading; so the first chance she got she went to the Academy's library. She found a whole armful of books whose loan cards had never been marked since the day they were put on the shelves, and there went the evening she had planned to set aside for talking over her wardrobe with Joy.

There was a thin book in a bright red binding by one David Hilbert called *Foundations of Geometry*. Thinking comfortably that she might brush up on her high school work which, after all, was three years in the past, she took that one. There was a squatter little book by one Georg Cantor: *Contribution to the Theory of Transfinite Numbers*. There were others.

After dinner she claimed the easy chair, adjusted a reading lamp and confidently opened *Foundations of Geometry*. Probably, she thought, it'll be a handy summary of definitions. Triangles are equal, similar, congruent, when soandso. There had been a great deal about triangles in high school, and then they had gone on to circles and that had been about that.

She read the first page swiftly and was turning to the second when she realized that she had not understood one single word. She went back and read again, slowly.

Clara looked at the gold stamping on the cover: *Foundations of Geometry*. She turned to the title page to check; sometimes the wrong book got bound into a cover. The title page too said that the book was David Hilbert's *Foundations of Geometry*. Well, it was a thought.

She read the page again and still there was nothing about triangles or circles; the page talked about "classes of things." It labeled "classes of things" with Greek letters and Roman letters and talked about what these "classes of things" could do and could not do; for instance two Roman-lettered "things" necessarily and sufficiently—whatever *that* meant—defined a Greek-lettered thing.

Geometry?

Joy was lying on the bed lackadaisically reading a novel; Kathryn was at her study table resolutely studying. They both looked up in astonishment when Clara hurled the book at the wall.

"For God's sake, Clara!" Joy said, astonished.

Kathryn picked up the book, glanced at it and gave it back to Clara. She said precisely, "I've always found mathematics a little exasperating, but I believe you can win through by patient studying."

Clara sputtered, almost laughing at herself, "It's ridiculous. I can't understand one word of it. It looks like English and it seems to be perfectly straightforward, but it's gibberish. What's the man *talking* about? It's supposed to be geometry. If it were all x's and y's and fancy signs I've never seen before I wouldn't mind, but I thought I *knew* geometry and I can't understand one word!"

"Then why bother?" Joy yawned.

"I *want* to, that's *why*," Clara said.

"No accounting for taste," said Joy, and went back to her novel.

"May I?" asked Kathryn, reaching for the slim red book.

"Lord, yes! Maybe we can lick this thing together."

Kathryn read the first page twice, and then said candidly, "It doesn't mean a thing to me. I'm sorry. And now I've got to finish up my Virgil for tomorrow."

She went back to her table and resumed her laborious translating of the assigned passage.

Clara said to herself: You're sore because this thing seems to be traveling under an alias. Now, what makes you think that? Because what you learned in a Pennsylvania high school from Mrs. Schnitzen, who was fifty-five years old and had a bare Bachelor of Arts degree from a fifth-rate teachers' college, does not square up with what is written here by—she checked the title page—Professor David Hilbert, Ph.D., of the Mathematics Faculty of the University of Goettingen.

Let's be sensible, Clara. Obviously what you learned was not *real* geometry and this is.

She went back to the first page and read the first sentence word by word. Baldly and flat-footedly. *Assume—there—is—a—class—of—things—such—that—*

An hour later she closed the book, still on page one. Kathryn turned to her politely.

"I think I've got it," Clara said. "The damned thing means exactly what it says. 'Classes of things.' What they are doesn't matter except as you define them. He's talking about lines and points but he deliberately doesn't say so because everybody *thinks* he knows what a line is and what a point is. He doesn't, though. You think a point is small, a line is straight and long—well, what does *that* mean? What does straight mean?"

Kathryn Jackson smiled demurely. "Why, not curved, not broken."

"What does 'curved' mean?" Clara shot back.

Kathryn thought and finally said helplessly, "Not straight."

"You see? You think you know, but you don't. You wind up going around in circles. Well, I know now what 'straight' means. It takes this whole page to say it and it doesn't

leave you with a picture in your head; this man's trying to get away from the pictures in the head."

Kathryn Jackson looked polite and dubious. "Maybe so," she said, "but this outside reading isn't required and you've got your assignments—"

Joy looked up. "Ladies," she complained, "how can I concentrate on Duchess Hotpants here if you're going to argue? The Duchess has just flogged and branded Black Cuthbert the Highwayman because he raped her in Chapter Three; the plot's beginning to move. A little less noise."

Kathryn bit. "I wish they didn't put that kind of thing in books," she said.

"Rape?" Joy asked, lazily amused.

Kathryn nodded, coloring a little. "Not that I'm criticizing your reading," she said hastily. "I'm sure it's a well-written novel with a lot of historical color."

"And rape," Joy put in.

Kathryn felt like turning to her desk and opening a textbook in a marked manner to put an end to the conversation, but did not dare. Rape was nothing to joke about, she thought darkly. "How's your English class?" she asked instead.

"Jim will be eating out of my hand all through the semester. No sweat there. I *may* set a new scholastic record by not opening one English textbook *once* through the entire term. Bet I could get away with it. And pass. With a B!"

Avis Lesoeur came in, rapping on the doorframe. "Hi, kids."

"Hi," Joy said from the bed. "What can we do you for?"

The girl from elegant Montrose hesitated. "Matches," she said at last. "Roomie and I are out." She happened to be looking at Kathryn.

"I don't smoke," Kathryn said apologetically. "Joy, do you have any?"

"I have a lighter," Joy said, "but maybe there's a grubby old pack of matches in the bottom of my purse. Kathryn, would you hand it to me?"

Kathryn brought her the bag from her dresser and Joy rummaged in it. "Here we are," she said, and handed the pack to Avis.

"Thanks," said the girl. "Well, how is everybody settling down?"

Again she was looking at Kathryn.

Kathryn stammered, "It's very comfortable." And inside, she thought, despairing, she knows who I am; what I am. But—does she? She isn't sneering or grinning. . . .

"Well," Avis said, "back to the grind."

When she was gone Joy said, "Curious. She has a lighter; I know damn well she has because I'm jealous of it. It must have cost fifty bucks more than mine—one of those French jobs with a little gas tank in it. And—Clara, did you think she'd been crying?"

Clara looked up from her book. "Gee, I didn't notice."

"Very curious," Joy said, and went back to Duchess Hotpants.

Clara was flipping through the squat little book by Cantor and decided it was not for her—yet. There were special signs in it that she didn't know the meaning of—yet. But she felt a quiet confidence that some day she would.

She sputtered over the title of the next book that came to her hand; it was *First Course in Theory of Numbers*. But the author, reassuringly, was named Harry N. Wright, and he was President and Professor of Mathematics of City College of New York. She thought she could handle anything the boys at C.C.N.Y. could handle. Besides, after all—numbers? Everybody knew what numbers were.

It was a heart-stopping shock to find that everybody *didn't*.

So she lingered after the Thursday class, waiting at the desk for Dr. Crouch to look up.

He smiled pleasantly and reached for the name. "Miss—Gwynn. Did I go too fast for you?"

"It isn't that, Dr. Crouch. I hope you don't mind, but there's something I wanted to ask you." She fished out the slip of paper from her book and took a breath. "Would you mind reading this for me?"

The slip of paper said:

$$r_i - 1 = r_i$$

$$q_i + 1 + r_i + 1$$

Dr. Crouch frowned at it. Now, what was this child doing

playing with Euclid's algorism? It wasn't the first time, of course; there had been the football player at Southwestern who had somehow snooped out the facts of Dr. Crouch's background, and come to him with problems in Diophantine equations, apparently made hopeful because they could be stated in terms like "If I have five times as many apples as John has carrots," et cetera. But he had stopped *that*, and he was going to stop this too. Let them start poking around in his scholastic past, and they would soon be nosing through his personal history too.

He said smoothly, "Good for you, Miss Gwynn; I see you've been doing research." That would hold her. "This is what is called Euclid's algorism; it's a short-cut method of finding what is called the 'greatest common divisor' of two numbers. But really, Miss—"

"Excuse me, Doctor, I know that much," she said impatiently. "But what I want to know is *why*? Why can't they just work things out with real numbers like eighteen and five hundred and sixty instead of all these r's and q's and i's?"

It was time to be firm. "Miss Gwynn, I'll have to remind you that the course is in calculus, not number theory. Don't run before you can walk. Furthermore, since Dr. Matthewson has appointed me to her faculty, I don't believe it is necessary for the students to pry into my past."

That was out in the open; but, he saw with surprise, it seemed to be a shot that had missed its mark.

"Pry into your past, Dr. Crouch?" She seemed to be completely at a loss.

He said stiffly, "Apparently someone has done so. It is true that at one time I made number theory my specialty; but the subject here is an entirely different discipline."

She said from the heart, baffled but aware that somehow he had made a mistake which worried him, "Dr. Crouch, I don't know a thing about you that I didn't find out right here in this room from you. If I stepped out of line where I shouldn't, I'm sorry, but truly I haven't pried."

"But Euclid's—"

She showed him the slim black book. "I got it out of here. *Theory of Numbers*, by somebody named Harry Wright. After the last class I kept thinking about some of the things

you'd said, and I just couldn't make them add up. So I went to the library, and—"

It was possible, he had to admit, it was ridiculously unlikely—what a place to find an *interested* math student! But it was possible. He said gruffly:

"I'm sorry, Miss Gwynn. Will you accept my apology and call it a closed incident?"

"Gladly. Now that that's out of the way, what about this? I've had little enough math, God knows, but I *thought* I knew how to write a simple division problem in algebra. A over b equals c —or maybe x or n or y . But this thing! Subscripts with plusses and minuses. . . ."

He thought, She's made me apologize, so now she knows I have to answer her stupid questions. He said briskly, "Euclid's algorism, of which you have shown me the last step, is a method of establishing the g.c.d. of any two positive integers by means of successive divisions of partial quotients, and the reduction of successive remainders to zero." He gave her a thin smile.

She said, "Good! That much I figured out from the book, Dr. Crouch. Now, why couldn't they just write it with x 's and y 's?"

He glared at her; this one's going to be a trouble-maker, he thought.

"It is not part of the curriculum of this course, Miss Gwynn," he said.

She looked confused. "Well, I know. But, Dr. Crouch—I mean, surely you should be able to—"

He said, "I have a very heavy schedule, Miss Gwynn." Liar, he admitted bleakly to himself. "I'll be glad to help you with any questions that may come up—as long as they pertain to this class."

She shook her head impatiently; he didn't seem to grasp her meaning. "They *do* pertain. How can I understand calculus if I can't get this sort of thing into my head?"

He said, "I'll put it bluntly, Miss Gwynn. If it's in the book I gave you, I'll discuss it. If it isn't, I won't."

"But—" her voice was getting shrill, "isn't a teacher supposed to—"

"Good-by, Miss Gwynn," he said.

A second later she jumped back and stood with her hand to her mouth. "I—I'm sorry, I—"

She had slapped him cleanly across the face.

VI

ANN WAS SITTING on Joy's bed, smoking a cigarette, giving freely of her companionship and advice. Clara walked in abstractedly. Joy and Kathryn were busy packing.

Packing?

Clara said, "What's going on here?"

Kathryn stood up and closed her foot locker. One of the advantages of not having much was that it didn't take long to pack. She said, "We're moving. Ann fixed it up for us to move in with the Lambs."

"As pledges, of course," said Ann. "But that's the big hurdle. Once you're in—" she winked "—they aren't going to throw you out. It would just be too embarrassing all around." And she was the girl who could testify to that, she thought. Wasn't she still a member of the Lambs—in spite of the nastiness at College of the Pacific?

Joy crowed, "Isn't it marvelous, Clara? Of course, if it hadn't been for that revolting Mathus girl last year, we would have been pledged as freshmen. I *told* her I'd turned down DXK. Thank God she's gone, because Lucille Conyers, whatever you may say about her—"

Clara interrupted, "How did you do it, Ann?"

Ann smiled sweetly. "I told you I would, didn't I? Don't ask questions." She extinguished her cigarette and said, "I'll see you over at the Lambs House."

Nicely done, she thought comfortably, walking out of the room. One didn't want to be too explicit about how one's miracles were performed. Columbus and his egg, Sherlock Holmes and his keenly observant solutions—everything was obvious and easy, once it was explained. So one never explained. One didn't say, for instance, that it just so hap-

pened that the chapter had a new administration and a depleted membership.

It hadn't been particularly hard to convince Lucille Conyers that the three girls were valuable pledges. But if one simply kept one's mouth shut the girls would *assume* it had been hard; and there would be a debt of gratitude. Particularly from that attractive little Jackson girl. She never in God's world would have been pledged by the Lambs without Ann's intervention; she never could have afforded the money involved without Ann's promise of help.

Not that Ann relied on gratitude to keep her—special friends. But it helped.

She reported to the Regent of the Lambs, "They're packing now. I told Henry to go up for their things in twenty minutes."

The Regent tapped a pencil against her teeth. She said vaguely, "I suppose we can put Squires in with Alice Hartshorne, and Clara Gwynn can go—"

Ann said politely, "You know best. Still, they *have* been roommates all along. I think they'd be a little disappointed if we had to break them up."

"Um. Well, why not? There's a vacant room just off the stairs—the Junior Officer just moved out of it because she thought it was too drafty. They don't seem particularly delicate, do they?"

"Of course not. They'd love it."

Lucille Conyers made a note. "Fine. Then, let's see, the Jackson girl—"

"Oh, I thought I'd take her in with me," Ann explained. "She may need a little looking after, until she gets her bearings."

The Regent's expression cleared. "That's very good of you, Ann," she said warmly.

Ann said, "It's a pleasure to help out."

McGivern sat up with a jerk and glared around, waiting for someone to giggle.

There wasn't anyone to giggle because he nodded. He was alone in his room, half-dozing over his typewriter and tumbler of inexpensive whisky. He caught a glimpse of what was in his typewriter, a sheet of paper that began:

The shores of Gardiner's Bay are pocked with the soundings of treasure-hunters, looking for the loot of Captain Kidd. But the strangest jewel that lies off the end of Long Island is set in crude concrete and sparkles with the whiteness of bleached bone. Its name: Justice McCavity. Its—

It broke off there. McGivern dimly remembered; this was the beginning of a chapter of his book.

He took it out of the typewriter, placed it neatly in the drawer and glanced at the clock.

He thought: What was it that Dr. Matthewson had said? Something about drinking. Come over and have one?

No, that wasn't it. He pondered for a moment; it had been something important, he thought fuzzily, but he couldn't quite remember.

Well, it would come to him. He felt like a breath of air, a stroll on the Mall before turning in. He felt fairly good, but checked his heart with his palm. Fairly good.

Walking slowly down the stairs, pausing for a moment at the landing as the doctor said he should, he considered that the semester was off to a fair start. One week of classes had shown him who was who. There were the usual dullards, there were a couple of smart, lazy girls and there was one, Ann Riker, a transfer senior from California, who was very sharp indeed. He gathered that she had already published a little. The girl might conceivably go far in the class-magazine field.

"Never would have made it in the old days, though," he mused, not aware that he was talking aloud. Different breed of cat in the old days. Nelly Bly was before his time, but the Nelly Bly tradition still was strong. If there wasn't news, you made it.

He wondered briefly whether the Hearst-Pulitzer New York circulation war really had started the Spanish-American war. The old debate always used to climax speakeasy arguments about the propriety of newspaper stunts. Sometimes he had found himself on one side of the debate, sometimes the other. He chuckled. Usually his opinion had been determined by how much or little he disliked the opposite arguer.

What was it Dr. Matthewson said? No matter; he couldn't remember. He was handling his seminar nicely, the girls would all turn in projects of some sort, and Miss Riker's would be brilliant and probably would get her a job on *Harper's Bazaar* or *Vogue*. Unless she wrote a novel like everybody else, in which case the novel would be a brilliant success. He was feeling mellow and kindly to one and all, he thought, which was a hell of a way for a newspaperman of the old school to feel. But maybe he had it coming to him after the endless decades of tension. One week was over, he was doing his job, he was getting some work done on the book.

Then he noticed that he had the bottle in his hand.

That was what Dr. Matthewson had told him. He shoved it into his pocket and felt his heart pick up speed. It wouldn't be a good idea to climb those steps again right now. He had a short rest coming to him.

He looked out across the darkness of the Mall, students passing singly or in pairs, the glow of cigarettes, a flaring match far down the Georgian vista, the yellow-lighted windows gay with the fancy curtains that the girls loved to put up. A pleasant place, Eleusis, and now he really ought to find a bench.

He walked slowly to the small grove of oaks planted by some ancient graduating class and let himself down slowly, holding the iron arm rests, onto the nearest bench in the deepest shadows.

The shadows were deep, the nearby walk was unfrequented at the moment, a golden moment which soon might pass. He took the bottle from his pocket, unscrewed the cap and had a small drink.

The book was good; there was no doubt of that. When he had time to pull it together—next summer vacation, say—he'd submit it to some first-line house for consideration. Not so much for the money, though that would be welcome, but for the pleasure for a job well done and—damn it all!—to let the youngsters know that there was once upon a time a tough and funny and wonderful old world which with its laughter and tears was no more now than a memory of a fragrance.

Somebody was coming down the walk, cutting across the

grass to his bench and—sitting down at the other end. He could barely see her with eyes accustomed by now to the dark, and she could not see him at all.

I am endowed, he thought romantically, with the Ring of Gyges, if I have my classical reference correct, whereby, invisible as a sprite, I may observe this probably very dull young lady.

She started to sob.

Lordie, he thought in a panic, what do I do now? Get up and walk away? Then she'll feel like dirt and I'll feel like a swine. Wait it out? Impossible; she'll notice me sooner or later and then she'll feel doubly dirty and I'll feel doubly swinish. McGivern, assert yourself.

"Can it be that bad?" he asked quietly. "Homesick?"

She jumped up with a small shriek and for a moment he thought she was going to run away.

"I'm Mr. McGivern," he said. "Head of Journalism. I'm the fatherly type. Too old for anything else. Want to tell me about it?"

She sat down again, sniffing. "Kathryn Jackson," she said. And then, bitterly, "I'm a—"

The word sounded like, almost certainly was, *pool*.

Very interesting, he thought. Have I gone crazy, or has she? Is she a free-form pool or a plain old rectangular pool? Tile or the more modern stainless steel?

"I'm extremely sorry to hear that, my dear," he said gravely. "Would you mind telling me just what in hell a pool may be?"

"Dirt," she said bitterly. "Ask anybody. They say we're inbred. They tell rotten jokes about us. The storekeepers swindle us. We get the worst jobs last. All the town boys think they can—can—*make* a Poole girl without any trouble at all. And the hell of it is, they're right—about some of it." She was sobbing again.

A dim, very dim, light was beginning to dawn. He asked tentatively, "You spell that P-O-O-L-E?"

She nodded.

He had heard vaguely of the Pooles. It was a very local thing, along maybe a hundred miles of the Susquehanna, not very far from Eleusis. They were a—a—he groped for the technical term—a "population island," a sort of subrace with

their own subculture, passed by the Twentieth Century. They were not the only such. The "Redbones" of the south, a Negro-Indian group, were fairly well known. Less well known were a group he had met in '23 or thereabouts covering a murder in Rockland County, the "Jackson Whites." The Jackson Whites lived in the hills, shot squirrels, distilled their own liquor, resisted the compulsory education laws of the state of New York, and had tried earnestly to kill him when he came snooping around to cover his story. The Jackson Whites were supposed to be descended from Hessian mercenaries who deserted Gage's army in Revolutionary days *plus* a passel of prostitutes brought into New York for the use of the British.

So this was a Poole, apparently much the same thing: an Indian-Negro-white blend with its own traditions, the local underdog and whipping boy. The kindest thing he had ever heard about the Pooles was somebody's contemptuous dismissal: "They're regular grown-up Huck Finns. You don't have to worry about them; they won't show up in your classes, McGivern."

Well, one had, if not in his class at least on his bench.

"Kathryn," he said, "what of it? Don't you know that there are two billion people who never heard of the Pooles? Who will take you for what you are? And it's a little dark here, but by your outline and your pleasant voice I'd say you happen to be a very attractive young lady."

She said bitterly, "I don't want to be attractive. That's another one of their stories. All the Poole girls are good-looking but they fall apart and get fat and sloppy by the time they're thirty. And damn them, it's partly true. A woman cooks on a wood stove because her husband can't get a decent job so he can't get credit at the appliance store for a gas stove or bottled gas to run it. Or if there is a good job her husband decides he'd rather go fishing so he takes a week off. So she hauls water and chops wood and washes on a washboard—of course we're broken down in our thirties. I don't want to be attractive; I want to be plain and intelligent-looking so I won't have to waste time fending off the town slickers who've heard all about us Poole gals, and so I'll look like a Latin teacher. I *will* be a Latin teacher!"

He thought privately and dryly: What a bizarre ambi-

tion. But the psychological machinery behind it was nakedly evident. Being a Latin teacher is as far as you can possibly get from being a happy-go-lucky illiterate Poole, so that's what this child has set her sights on.

"Are the other girls riding you about it?" he asked. If so there was a faint possibility that official action might be taken.

"It isn't that."

"Then what is it?"

"I—I've been pledged to the Lambs."

His old senses *were* deserting him; it had sounded exactly as though she had said she had been pledged to the Lambs. He had the cap off the bottle and the bottle halfway to his mouth in automatic response before he remembered where he was.

Fortunately it was dark; she hadn't seen. He started to cap the bottle—and then, since it was still dark, changed his mind and permitted himself one fast, inconspicuous one.

"My dear," he said, "please explain yourself. I confess that I am not as familiar with undergraduate affairs as I might be, but it was my impression that being pledged by the Lambs was an occasion for celebration, not for weeping in the dark."

"For some people, maybe. Not for me." She sighed and said wretchedly, "Mr. McGivern, maybe I could have sneaked through college without everybody knowing I was a Poole if I kept my head down and my mouth closed, and out of the limelight. But there must be *somebody* at Eleusis that knows about us—I'm nearly sure a girl named Avis Lesoeur does—and wouldn't you say the minute the word gets out I'm in the Lambs that somebody will start talking?"

He said humbly, "Excuse me. Once I was quicker in my perceptions than I am now. Like Caesar's wife, an L.L.L. pledge must be invulnerable to gossip."

She said after a moment, "Mr. McGivern, have I made myself perfectly clear? The only thing I have to be ashamed of is the reputation of my family. I'm not afraid of gossip about me personally. It wouldn't be true."

He caught the challenging tone of her voice. Good enough, he thought, a little surprised; there's still pride. Whatever Susquehanna County has accomplished with this girl, they haven't yet broken her.

He said, "Then what are you afraid of, Kathryn? If it isn't true about you personally—"

Her voice caught. "It isn't true *yet*."

McGivern, who had interviewed some thousands of persons who were astonished to see in his paper the next day how much they had told him, knew when to wait. Let her get to it in her own way. Besides, it was pleasant sitting here in the dark with someone who did not discount him as a senile alcoholic.

She said slowly, "There's this girl. Ann Riker. She's the one who sponsored us for the Lambs. She said she would, and I didn't believe it; but she came through. I—Mr. McGivern, I *told* her I couldn't afford the Lambs. Just as simple as that. You can't be in the Lambs and dress like the kind of coal-miner's mother-in-law I do—not because I like to look this way, believe me. But because I can't afford any better. I can't afford lots of clothes; I can't afford the dues and room rent and everything else that goes with it. So Ann said, 'Honey, the old man left me loaded. Let me help out. I swear to God it won't mean a thing to me, and if you ever make a million you can pay me back if you want to.' She's an awfully persuasive girl, Mr. McGivern. I don't know if you know her."

"Indeed I do," said McGivern, blinking into the darkness. But it was a lie, he realized. Up until that moment he had thought he'd known her, but among all of the attributes he had catalogued for the Riker girl there had been nothing labeled "charity."

"Excuse me," he said, fumbling, "but is there any chance you *might* make a million?"

The girl's laugh answered him. He said, "I see. So you wonder why she wants to do all this for you."

"Well, not exactly that—she really does have buckets of money. It's awfully nice of her. But it's the business of the Pooles; they're lazy. They sponge off their neighbors. They've always got a hand out." She said, shaking, "Mr. McGivern, I don't sleep with the boys, I don't smoke, I don't drink anything but beer—and I don't even like the taste of that. And up to now, I haven't sponged off anybody. You see? If I cross this line, maybe I'll cross the others."

And then it'll be true of me, what they say about all us Pooles."

My dear, McGivern said—but not out loud—you've got a right to be worried; but you're worried about the wrong thing. Ann Riker. A missing piece popped into place in his mind. Ann Riker, who really was not very likely to give away something for nothing, after all.

The girl was quiet at her end of the bench. McGivern sighed and allowed himself another small, inconspicuous drink. You look at something called Ann Riker, and you assume—because it is so dressed, so coiffeured, so cosmeticked as to make you assume—that it is a girl. Even though you once covered Night Court in the theatrical district of New York, even though your beat included the all-girl bars in the Village and the precinct houses around Times Square, you look at a young female and accept her at face value.

He said diffidently, wishing he had dared a bigger drink, "Tell me something, Kathryn. In the L.L.L. house, do the girls get to pick their roommates?"

She was plainly startled. "Why—I guess so. Anyway, Ann has it fixed up for us to room together—she says it's a mean little room, but better than the dormitories. I haven't seen it yet."

Alarm bells rang in his head.

The question was, he thought fretfully, what do I do now? I've had six rough decades already, but I've never before had to tell a young girl the facts of life.

"Have you got a boy-friend?" he demanded.

It came out harsher than he had planned. She moved uneasily in the seat; he hurried to say, "I mean, I'm just trying to get a perspective on your problem, Kathryn. Back in Susquehanna County, were all the males under the impression that Poole girls were legitimate quarry of the hunt—or was there one who was good for quieter pursuits, such as an evening at the movies?"

"Yes, there's one." But she was obviously alarmed; he could hear the is-this-old-goat-getting-ideas percolating in her mind. "There was one, anyway—a machinist in the Lehigh car shops named Gus Sprayragen. But it's all past tense, Mr. McGivern. We're *phffft*."

"Why?"

She said coldly, "Because I wanted to, Mr. McGivern. Now, if you don't mind, I think—"

"Kathryn," he said, "you are obviously too polite to say, 'All this is none of your Goddam business, McGivern.' I ask you to consider this before you go: You didn't find me weeping on a bench in the dark. Believe me, I'm aware that I'm sticking my nose in. I ask you to accept my word that my purposes are neither curiosity nor libido."

She said, "I guess I'm touchy. It goes with being a Poole, you see."

He said passionately, "To hell with your damn Pooles, Kathryn! You are too touchy. You're looking for a foot to be ground in your face, and by God you'll find one if you have to flop on your back in the middle of Broadway and Forty-Second Street during the rush hour. Kathryn, did you ditch your young man because he was just a lousy machinist?"

She said tautly, "Maybe I did. What—"

"Don't do it to yourself, Kathryn," he said. "Don't make yourself as bad as the gentry of Susquehanna County. Are you good enough to be here? Believe me, you are. Then why isn't your young man good enough for you? If he's a drunk or a criminal, that's one thing—but there is in this country no jail sentence provided by law for being a machinist."

He stopped, spent. The heart was pounding alarmingly. I shouldn't have had those two drinks, he thought fuzzily. I especially shouldn't have sat to talk with this nice, worried, silly girl, who may yet turn out to be my murderer.

She said slowly, "What do you want me to do?"

"Whatever you want to do." He wasn't getting across, he could feel it. "Bring him down here for the Lambs dance—the Gambol, as they cleverly style it. But don't let yourself be trapped into snobbery." And don't, he said silently, let yourself be trapped into whatever arrangements Ann Riker may propose, against which the surest defense would be the presence of a courting male.

"I don't understand Lesoeur," she said, almost absent-mindedly. "I had some terrible moments the first couple of times we met. She knows; I'm sure she knows. But she isn't telling anybody and she goes out of her way to talk to me."

She doesn't *like* me—" She managed a chuckle. "Troubles, troubles, troubles," she said. "Thanks, Mr. McGivern. You've been sweet."

Sweet. Good God Almighty. Reporters by the score must be whirling in their graves, graves to which, according to cityroom legend from Denver to New York, he had hounded them. "Thanks, Kathryn," he said wryly. "By the way, my Miss Riker appears to be a transfer student from California. Do you happen to know why she transferred?"

"Oh, yes," she said confidently. "Wanderlust."

Well, maybe. "I hope you've made a few friends here, Kathryn."

"There's Ann. And Joy Squires. Don't know whether you know her."

Ah, but he did. Vicariously, via Jim Henschel, whose life-blood Miss Squires was extracting drop by drop. "Um," he said.

"And Clara Gwynn. Mr. McGivern, I don't want to meddle, but do you know Dr. Crouch, the new math teacher?"

"Slightly. As you said, he's new." And unsociable.

"Clara slapped his face a week ago."

"What? No, never mind repeating; I heard you." So *that* was what was wrong with Crouch, why he had tobogganed down the academic scale. A fanny-pincher.

"She doesn't know why."

"Why what?" he asked, befuddled.

"Why she *slapped* him."

"I seem to have gone off the rails."

"No; it's very confusing. She walked into our room looking like death warmed over and she said she slapped Crouch and didn't know why. She went to him after class and asked him about some higher math she's interested in and he brushed her off and she slapped him. She was afraid she'd be expelled or something, but absolutely nothing happened. What I wanted to know, for Clara's peace of mind, is whether he's *going* to do anything. She doesn't dare ask."

"Crouch hasn't said a word about it. Brushed her off, eh?"

"She thought so. *I* wouldn't care, but it's fantastic the way she's been plowing into math. She opens a book and she's in a daze until midnight. I can't *see* it."

McGivern quoted, "‘Euclid alone has looked on Beauty bare.’ E. St. V. Millay. Which means that different people have different pleasures. Some of them have damned peculiar pleasures." He was going to go on this time with a flat-footed warning about Riker, but conscience wouldn't let it out. Give the kid a break, for God's sake! Maybe Riker's normal and altruistic. Maybe she's just a psychic deviate who knows only that she likes the company of girls, likes to do nice things for them, and would be horrified by the thought of physical contact. The third ugly possibility, that she was a predatory seducer? Not a shred of evidence except a hunch and the circumstances.

"Be sure to bring your young man to the Gambol," he said.

Kathryn Jackson got up, smoothing her skirt. "I don't know why," she said slowly, "but I'm quite sure you know what you're talking about, Mr. McGivern. I'll do it. Good night."

"Good night. And if there's trouble—you can come to me."

She nodded gravely, silhouetted against the porch light of the Lambs House, and then she was gone.

To himself, after he watched her go, McGivern silently quoted his great compatriot Private Mulvaney: "But can thim as help others help themselves?" He uncapped the bottle and took a drink.

Dr. Matthewson grimaced over the crabbed handwriting and the faded ink of the 1778 Order Book of General Zecchariah Stubbs. "Confound the Joneses," she muttered, and reached for her magnifying glass. A Jones had been court-martialled and fined twenty shillings on August 19th, 1778 for drunkenness in the camp, and it was vital to learn which of the two Joneses of the Expedition it was, William, Mordecai. The faded initial even under the lens was ambiguous; a chance flourish made it equally possible that it stood for W, William, or M, Mordecai.

This would hold up for a week her monograph on *Disciplinary Problems and Practices during the Stubbs Expedition to Subdue the Iroquois*. She was well aware that sloppier workers would evade the problem by "a private named Jones" or "one of the two Joneses then present in the camp"; such a travesty on scholarship would not suffice for her. *No*

compromise was her slogan, she thought smugly. She would now be forced to go through the entire book collecting capital M's and W's in order to render a truly valid judgment on the sinner of August 19th.

"The woes of a scholar," she said, and decisively snapped shut her notebook. She turned off the reading lamp in whose small pool of light she worked and traced her way in the dark through the maze of her apartment to the door. That she double-locked from the outside before going downstairs.

Nine-thirty o'clock and all appeared to be well on the Mall.

She stood in the light on the portico of the Administration Building as four girls passed in a group. They said, "Good evening, Dr. Matthewson."

She glanced at them and fired off, "Good evening, Miss Waycross, Miss Bulyer, Miss Trimble, Miss Schuh. Miss Trimble, a word with you. You other young ladies may proceed."

Miss Trimble, apprehensive, climbed the three granite steps to the portico.

Dr. Matthewson thought: Sophomore, Liberal Arts, serious trouble all through her freshman year collecting tuition; her father an appliance dealer and apparently not a very good one. Her first check now one week late. It is a privilege for her to be here at all.

"Shorts are not worn on the Mall of the Academy, Miss Trimble," Dr. Matthewson snapped. "As a sophomore you should be very well aware of this rule. I feel that your flouting of it betrays a want of character and refinement."

"It was such a warm night," the girl floundered.

"You may go," Dr. Matthewson snapped.

She went, sick apprehension in her eyes. Trimble, Dr. Matthewson thought contemptuously. Trash who drifted in with the railroad. Her sister had married an Italian, placing herself outside the pale of decent society.

She exchanged stiff greetings with the young ladies who passed as she stiffly walked down the Mall, a small grey marionette on stilts.

"Good evening, Dr. Matthewson," a man's tired voice said from the shadows of the Memorial Oaks.

"Good evening, Mr. McGivern," she said. "Are you by

any chance drunk?" Some girls were passing; they heard and uttered shocked giggles.

"Some day, Dr. Matthewson," said Mr. McGivern tiredly, emerging from the shadows, "somebody is going to wring your skinny neck."

She tapped her hearing aid receiver and said sharply, "You are mumbling, Mr. McGivern. You must make an effort to be understood. Repeat your remark, please."

"It doesn't matter," Mr. McGivern said. "Good night." He walked slowly down the path to Faculty House and she grinned after him for a moment before she resumed her patrol.

VII

"YOU'RE delicious, Kathryn," Ann said gravely from the bed.

Kathryn looked up, flushed. Ann laughed. "No, don't stop. You've been having the time of your life, seeing how the other half lives. Why shouldn't you? That's exactly what this sort of silly-spendthrift decor is for—to attract attention because of its undetachable price-tag."

Kathryn smiled back, half-heartedly, and made an effort to go on poking through fantastically large closets, touching the orchid tiles of the bath. The bedspread appeared to be raw silk. The furniture was sufficiently uncomfortable and frail to be antique—or, Kathryn guessed, a nearly equally expensive copy.

She said, "I admit it's a change from Poole Hollow."

"It's a dump," Ann said matter-of-factly. "It cost a million dollars a room to furnish—trust Dr. Matthewson to goose the L.L.L. alumnae groups for that. But it's a dreary dump all the same, Kathryn. You'll live in better."

"I'd better crack some books," said Kathryn. "Speaking of Dr. Matthewson reminds me of some advice she gave me when we first met. She pointed out that the rule was no study,

no scholarship—especially for us nigger-Indians from Poole Hollow.”

“You do go on about that place,” said Ann. “Some day you and I must look the place over. I have a birthday during Christmas week and another big chunk of dough drops in my lap; should we go on a little trip to celebrate it?”

She sat up, looking annoyed. A girl poked her head in the door. “What is it?” she demanded.

At her tone the girl looked surprised, then irritated. “Company,” she said shortly. “Wants to see Jackson.”

She was gone before Kathryn could ask who it was. She excused herself to Ann and walked down the carpeted steps. She was wearing a borrowed housecoat of Ann Riker’s—she doggedly insisted on thinking of it as borrowed, though Ann had called it a gift—and she was concentrating on trying to get used to it.

The company was Avis Lesoeur.

She flashed a brilliant smile on Kathryn. “I thought I’d drop in to see if you were comfortable,” she said. “We’ll miss you in the dorm.”

Kathryn said uneasily, “That’s nice of you. Would you like to come up and visit a bit?” Now, why was this girl calling on *her*? If it had been Joy, that would be one thing—there could be a cousinly interest. But it was absurd for Avis to pretend neighborliness—unless—unless she really *didn’t* know. . . .

Avis said, “Oh, I just thought we old Susquehanna-County-ites ought to stick together. I’ve only been to Poole Hollow a few times—” there went *that* theory—“but I know people all over the county; we must have friends in common. No, I’d better not go upstairs; I have to get back to the dorm before they lock the doors. But please let’s get together and talk, Kathryn. Tomorrow?”

“No, I—” Kathryn began automatically.

“Sunday, then. Right after chapel; I’ll meet you there. All right? And now I really must go.”

Kathryn stared after her, bewildered.

She started back up the stairs, feeling slightly dizzy. Before she reached the top she changed her mind about going back to Ann’s room—to Ann’s and her own room, she corrected herself conscientiously. She turned the other way at the head

of the stairs, toward the room occupied by the other two new girls. Joy would be there; Joy could tell her about her cousin.

But Joy couldn't because Joy wasn't. Clara demanded, "You think she'd be here when there's an honor system and a handy back door? She crushed out of a maximum-security institution like the dorm to see her friend the professor; I doubt I'll ever see her again after dark while we're here."

Kathryn said, "Maybe you can tell me. Is Joy's cousin from Montrose nuts?" She described the visit.

Clara said comfortably, "All I know about Avis is what you've seen. She's beautiful and she knows it—just like Joy; it runs in the blood. If, as I gather, you were unfortunate enough to live on the wrong side of her personal railroad tracks, she is certainly capable of stomping your face in; but she hasn't got the brains to plan anything elaborate. Now, if you'll excuse me—" By the time the door closed behind Kathryn, Clara was back in her book.

She worried through six more pages of Hilbert before, reluctantly, she turned out the light. There was no sense waiting up for Joy, who was undoubtedly beering it up with Henschel.

Brushing her teeth, she looked at herself thoughtfully in the mirror. She really ought to take time from this mathematics kick to do something about herself, she reminded herself again. Tomorrow. Well, Sunday. Tomorrow was the day she had been looking forward to, when she could go into the thriving metropolis of Eleusis and see if there was, by any chance, anything on math in the public library there.

She slid into bed and sat up against the headboard with the light out, smoking a cigarette.

Everything was very different than she had planned it, she thought. It was time to try to sort things out.

She set up a balance sheet:

Item: Mathematics. Now, what in Heaven's name had got into her about mathematics? She told herself firmly that it was a kid's craze, like the time she had studied Esperanto or the time the visiting young ensign had showed her how they could hold private conversations in Morse code and she'd memorized the dits and dahs. After all, what was the good of mathematics?

Item: The sisterhood of Lambda Lambda Lambda. She was in the Lambs, at least as a pledge, and she supposed she ought to be grateful to Ann, who must have passed a miracle to bring it about. She *should* be grateful, because she was aware that the most eligible boys around were brothers or cousins of Eleusis Lambs. Therefore they would appear at the Gambol. Therefore she would get a chance to meet them—because of the intervention of Ann Riker.

So she ought to be grateful to Ann.

The trouble was, she told herself as she stubbed out her cigarette, she was a fly-brain. She had to make up her mind what she wanted. The curriculum at Eleusis wasn't demanding; she had plenty of spare time.

She could use a lot of it for the sort of enforced socializing being a Lamb called for. That would please her mother.

She could use what was left over for trying to make herself look halfway human. Exercise, for instance—an hour a day, conscientiously done, would melt off a good bit of flab; and what that didn't do, a little hard work on skin care and hair brushing would handle. That would please everybody.

But she couldn't socialize or make herself into an acceptably luscious man-trap and still carry on with all this nonsensical mathematics.

She got up and turned the light on again. She opened the bathroom door wide and, standing before the mirror on the inside of the door, slipped out of her sensible nightgown and examined her body.

It was just too damned bad that Praxiteles wasn't still around, she thought. There wasn't anything wrong with her figure—except that it was healthily full. Why shouldn't it be? For child-bearing, for instance, she had it all over the Anns and Joys of the world.

"How do you do, Miss Gwynn Coal and Iron, Incorporated?" she asked the mirror gravely. "Miss Gwynn Coal and Iron, do you know Mr. Shenandoah Belting and Cordage? Now I'll just leave you two youngsters to get acquainted; I see dear old Mrs. Huxtable and Huxtable, Attorneys at Law, across the room. She's such an old dear!"

They were all old dears, she thought dispassionately as she slipped on her robe again. Grandfather's picture—everybody had a Grandfather's picture—hung in the entrance hall

and he was jovially referred to as "the bloody old pirate" in private, and in public as "that aggressive and far-sighted builder of the American dream." You studied the face of your own Grandfather and the faces of the Grandfathers in all the other entrance halls and found them curiously similar; little dishmop-like chin whiskers, sometimes sideburns, tight thin lips that spoke of resolution and rotted teeth; slate-grey eyes for the most part and a grim glare for the overall attitude.

Grandfather, everybody's grandfather, the bloody old pirate, the aggressive and far-sighted builder of the American dream, was little discussed. You tossed him off as "Great old boy!" and that was that, because the Grandfathers were not old dears. You knew somehow that they were penny-pinching, labor-sweating swindlers and near-swindlers after the fashion of the nineteenth century.

And then three generations later everybody was an old dear with perfect table manners, a good tennis service and the cultivated ability to talk without a pause through dinner without saying a word.

"We're not rich in this town," her mother would say gayly to guests from New York or Chicago, "but we have our creature comforts. That's Grandfather there—the founder. Bloody old pirate! But he did well by us and—" Gravely now "—and in his way he was a builder of the American dream."

Well, if the American dream was tennis, table manners and small talk, yes.

And she, Miss Gwynn Coal and Iron, Incorporated, would some day met the right young Mr. Shenandoah Belting and Cordage and they would be joined in holy wedlock while both their Grandfathers beamed approvingly from a Baptist Paradise—no drinking, smoking, dancing or profane music; guests are expected to be present for all services—and then they'd go to Paris or Capri or whatever the right place would be that year for the honeymoon, and she'd have three children and would soon be comfortably an old dear herself.

All you had to do was roll along the rails they had laid for you. It wasn't hard. It would be hard to roll along the rails laid for a Chinese peasant, or a Mississippi Negro, or an Eskimo seal-hunter or a Bulgarian village cobbler; all those

people would know hunger along the way, and painful illness, and poverty and desperately hard work and early death.

There was none of these things in store for her. She would roll along the rails providentially laid by Grandfather. She wouldn't be like Mrs. Mears, Mrs. Valley-Investment-Trust Mears, who drank. A Grandfather had done well by Mrs. Mears, born a Sloan, but nevertheless and inexplicably she drank. Once a year or so she would cease to circulate, and about a week later a limousine with Massachusetts plates would arrive at the beautiful old Mears place in Camden Drive, all the way from Boston, and two pretty girls and a competent-looking young man, all dressed like gentlefolk, would assist Mrs. Mears into the car and away they'd go. And perhaps ten days or two weeks later Mrs. Mears would be back in circulation again, eating lightly, laughing softly and apologetically with that special charm of hers that made people say, "Let's have Mrs. Mears over; you can't help having fun when she's around. You just know she's enjoying herself."

Another old dear had departed from the rails three years ago while Clara was in high school, and very little studying had got done as the information drifted for a week through the corridors and classrooms. One of the younger married people, impeccable, a true granddaughter of a Grandfather, Mrs. Holman, actually so exalted that she had been a little above the Gwynns and their crowd, inviting them only to her larger parties. To put it crudely, Mrs. Holman had disappeared and turned up a month later in a St. Louis whorehouse. The out-of-town papers smuggled in and circulated through the high school—naturally the local papers were silent after the first "Foul Play Feared" stories—quoted the madame as saying that Mrs. Holman had paid her to work there.

Mrs. Holman was now in a rest home, and Clara once overheard a remark attributed to her husband, "And she's not getting out of there. Ever."

Clara stuck out her tongue at herself in the mirror. Melodrama, she jeered. Tragedy queen. You can be perfectly sensible about this. What's wrong with leading an easy, comfortable, intricately social life that'll make Mother happy? And the math? Stick with it, have fun with it. Let them have

their sympathy subscription, their trips to the Modern Museum, their pleasures on the side. Yours happens to be math, so indulge it. Read, work at it, maybe take an extension course or two as time allows—

With sudden sick positiveness the bottom dropped out. It was *not* what she wanted. She wanted a narrower road. Finish this calculus course; it was obvious that the stuff was a useful tool and a bare introduction to something very fascinating indeed. Crowd on all sail, taking as much more math as she could get. Try to graduate with honors; this damned place was, after all, an accredited college and her degree would be recognized. Then on to the state university where for three years she could really begin to scratch the surface and at the same time earn an M.A.

She did not dare think that a doctorate might be for her. It meant original research, discovery.

But damn it, why not? Because Mother wouldn't like it? Mother could make the best of it. What was wrong with being a Ph.D. in mathematics and teaching somewhere, with plenty of time to research and attend the meetings where mathematicians revived themselves by exchange of ideas?

Dr. Crouch! She sneered. A man without fire, a living affront to mathematics. Somehow he had acquired the techniques; obviously he had never acquired the spirit. An extremely annoying man and she was sure she hated him.

She returned to her reading chair and picked up Cantor. She could get almost drunk on Cantor and his transfinite numbers. The man was simultaneously as crazy as a hoot-owl and as safe as the Bank of England. His transfinite numbers were things that obeyed not one common-sense law of the universe but went swooping and sailing around, caroming into one another, splitting and merging by mad laws of their own. And Cantor calmly, a bit stuffily, proved that in their special case the common-sense laws of the universe were dead wrong. One and one did *not* make two; one minus one did *not* leave zero.

She immersed herself in the pages, plodding slowly from theorem to theorem, very happy and contented.

VIII

HAVING captured his prize, Jim Henschel didn't know exactly what to do with him. He said, "What'll it be, Crouch? This place is noted for its beer. It's a presumptuous little brew of no breeding, but I think it will amuse you with its insolence. Or else rye-and-ginger, maybe?"

Dr. Crouch said, "That'll be fine."

He appeared to have something on his mind. "Two beers, Abe," Henschel told the bartender. Now, what did this guy have to have on his mind? If anybody in this ratty little dump was going to have something on his mind, Henschel thought morbidly, it was himself. It isn't every night that you toss your whole life on the wheel and wait to see how the little ball will bounce.

He said, "I've sampled the high life of New York, Chicago, Boston and Altoona, Pa., but for glittering excitement and the gay social whirl I always come back to this place. It has a certain—I don't know what to call it. Squalor, I guess."

Dr. Crouch smiled vaguely and accepted a beer from Abe. He was looking around the saloon as though he had never seen one before. And in fact, he thought, it had been quite a while. There had been a time—oh, say ten years before—when for some months he had been very familiar with the inside of saloons of all sorts and sizes. He had also, at the same time, worked up an intimate acquaintance with the interiors of brothels, gambling houses, Skid Row flops and—naturally—jails. But it had turned out that you couldn't, after all, drink yourself to death. Especially after the money ran out.

He said, "Good health, Henschel," and tasted his beer. You could tell a lot about a bar from its beer. Here, for instance, it came in stemware goblets, which indicated lace-curtain-Irish, pinky-extended snobbery; and the collar of foam was a good inch and a half high. Abe, he reasoned, was the kind

of bartender who would listen to your troubles, laugh at your jokes and stuff the correct change in your pocket if you appeared too drunk to count—that was the surface grace and respectability. But it was also probable, he thought, that this was a place wherein to really bend one on, for Abe would also be willing to accommodate a customer who didn't want to go home at closing time. For a price.

He tested his hypothesis with Henschel. "I suppose there's a blind pig in the basement?"

The boy looked startled. "Upstairs," he said. Now, maybe that explained a little something about Crouch, he thought; a man who can locate an after-hours drinking spot as unerringly as that didn't spend all his nights in the Y.M.C.A. He said tentatively, "You can get most any delight you're looking for upstairs, in fact. Girls. Liquor. A little crap-shooting on a Saturday night. Just ask Abe."

Crouch nodded, tasted his beer again and put it down. He supposed he really ought to make an effort to have a conversation with this boy who was, in a manner of speaking, his host. Still, he hadn't sought him out. He'd been on one of those long aimless walks that had somehow become a part of his pattern of existence when Henschel had spotted him from the car and insisted on a drink. Of course, Henschel's motives had been plain as the lipstick on his face; the boy had been trying to make friends with him ever since the first day. The lipstick—that would be the blonde girl somebody had mentioned, the undergraduate that accounted for Henschel's sticking to Eleusis.

He glanced at his watch. "Thanks, Henschel," he said. "I'd better be getting along. No, thanks—no lift; I want to walk."

As he left the bar he knew the boy was staring after him.

The hell with it, thought Crouch with a small twinge of conscience. The boy had got all the return he could expect out of his one-beer investment. One of the advantages of being thought a queer duck was that you weren't obligated to buy the second round of beer or make your own revealing attempts at conversation.

And anyway, Crouch had something on his mind—thus the recent long rambles. It was something somehow linked with that girl, that Clara Gwynn, who had so incredibly slapped his face.

It had been a long time since Crouch had had anything on his mind; he had a right, he thought, to be alone with it, even if it meant being rude to Henschel. And before he was half a block from the "hotel," he had completely forgotten that Henschel ever lived.

In the mirror behind the bar, Henschel caught a glimpse of his face and made a quick retreat to the men's room. He scrubbed at the lipstick Joy had left with a soaked paper towel and eventually got most of it off.

He thought wryly: If any faculty member had to see it, it's just as well it was Crouch. Loony old bastard! But he had left most of his beer in the glass, and that didn't square with the rum-dum theory.

And he hadn't found out Crouch's version of the slapping incident, in spite of what he'd promised Joy.

He stood there, gazing blankly at the mirror, the towel forgotten in his hand, thinking of all the things he had promised Joy. Half a dozen beers, an hour in a parked car, a surge of hormones in the blood stream, and you take your whole life and gift-wrap it and turn it over to slim hips and a soft bosom.

There was, he admitted to himself on a theoretical basis, the chance that she was simply a hard-working girl, attempting to make a passing grade in Eleusis Academy in any way that was convenient. He knew a stall when he got one, and he'd got one. So there was that possibility; she would keep him hot and hopeful through the semester, and dump him flat in June Week.

He smiled coldly at the mirror. That, he told his reflection, was what *she* thought—assuming, of course, that she did think it. It didn't matter what she thought, he analyzed dispassionately. In the car she had panted and sighed, and her body had shuddered and quaked; and although she'd stopped him short of Target One he had successfully penetrated all the other points of resistance on the skirmish line. She might be a meanly calculating female, but she was a female. Whatever her brain planned her body would have to execute; and her body would betray her.

It was a simple matter of biology. Her own hormones would deliver her to him—perhaps only for a night, perhaps

only for half an hour. But he would have her as surely as the setting of the sun, because he was older and smarter and more experienced than she, and he knew how to make her respond. So thought the man who, an hour before, had offered to devote his whole life's labor to the support and comfort of the hips and bosom.

Clara said fuzzily, "He's a class of classes such that he self-defines all members of his class. But he's got his father's eyes."

"Come on, wake up!"

Clara opened her eyes. Joy, looking smeared and excited, was shaking her shoulder. All the lights were on, and Joy was fully dressed.

"Wha—what time is it?"

"Who knows?" Joy was trembling with news. "Two o'clock or so. Wake up while I get out of my clothes—in case somebody gets inquisitive."

Clara struggled out of bed and lit a cigarette. It wasn't two o'clock, she saw by the traveling clock by the bed, it was nearly a quarter of three. Well, the next day was Saturday—but Joy was taking stupid chances, all the same.

She put her slippers on and limped over to the chair by the window. Joy was in the bathroom; she could hear her moving around in there.

She was only a few minutes. She came out with her make-up carefully removed, but without the nightly skin cream—an infallible sign of agitation.

"Well?" asked Clara. "What's it all about?"

"He proposed," she said briefly.

"So what?" asked Clara, disgustedly. "Is that any reason to wake me up?"

Joy was honestly bewildered. "But it's *marvelous*," she insisted, trying to sell her roommate on it. "So-what indeed! What are you and I on the world for if not to be proposed to, kid? Each one's a notch in the old six-shooter!"

"I don't get it," said Clara. "I'm very proud and happy for you and I don't get it. I'm going back to bed. Don't forget your skin cream."

Joy felt her face and said, "My God, I did, didn't I? Wait a minute." She dashed into the bathroom, came back with

the pot of cream and began to stroke it on. "Sometimes I think you haven't got a single feminine instinct, Clara."

"Sorry," Clara said, stubbing out her cigarette and turning over into the pillow.

"You haven't even asked me what I told him."

Clara rolled over again and asked distinctly, "What did you tell him, roomie?"

"I told him—" She giggled. "I told him I'd think it over. I told him I thought he was very sweet and it was a surprise and I'd have to give it a lot of earnest thought. And I gave him the melting smile over the beer glass and he almost curled up and perished on his bar stool."

"Well, are you going to marry him?"

Joy looked incredulous. "Are you crazy? A college teacher? I'm for the carriage trade, Clara. You can't get sirloin for twenty-five cents a pound and you can't get Joy Squires for thirty-five hundred a year or whatever he draws."

"I'm just crazy about your spiritual approach," Clara said in genuine awe. "I think I'll write to Dr. Norman Vincent Peale about you. Maybe you're not human at all; maybe you're the first of a new race of monsters."

"Pooh-pooh," Joy said airily. "You've been seeing too many movies. My mother brought me up sensibly, that's all. Men want just one thing out of us defenseless girls, and it's up to us to see that they pay for it. The more they want it, the more they pay, and if they can't afford it, that's too bad."

"Well, why the dickens didn't you tell him so?"

Creamed for the night, Joy climbed into her bed. "Two reasons. One, let him stay happily expectant for a while; he's got to be let down sooner or later so why hurry it and make him miserable?"

"That's good-hearted."

"Second, while I have him on the hook I confidently expect that my English grades are going to be pretty good."

"The gimmick. I should have known."

Joy was just a little exasperated; she let her claws show a very little. "Be fair, Clara. Didn't you pretty much try the same thing with your Dr. Crouch, going to him after class and trying to, well, impress him a little?"

"Nuts," said Clara distinctly. "Sometimes you're beneath contempt. There is absolutely nothing that you don't see

in terms of sex. It happens that I'm very much interested in math and I wanted something clarified."

"So that's why you slapped his face when he wouldn't bite," Joy said, and giggled.

It wasn't a mean giggle, Clara noted wearily. And she shouldn't be sore because Joy had a blind spot.

"You're not the only one," Joy said comfortingly. "I used to belt Jim around before he got trained."

"Huh?"

"He took liberties," Joy explained primly.

Clara, who knew perfectly well that Joy was a heavy smoocher and had been since fourteen, demanded, "Who're you kidding?"

"Well," said Joy uncomfortably, "I mean he wanted to go all the way. But he's got it through his head by now that I won't."

Clara, after a pause, asked hesitantly, "Do you mind if I ask you whether—?" Her voice trailed off.

"I'm a virgin," Joy said frankly.

Gloomily Clara said, "So'm I."

"My mother, as I said, brought me up sensibly, and she always said that keeping your virginity for your first marriage is always sensible."

Choosing her words carefully, Clara said, "From what you've told me about her, I'm a little surprised. She always impressed me as a—uh—broad-minded person."

"Broad-minded, also practical. Men value that thing, even nowadays. And, Pete's sake, it doesn't mean you can't have any *fun* without going all the way." She smiled reminiscently. Jim had been very tender and passionate, very excited and exciting. At one point, his urgency frightened her, but her simple "No, Jim" had stopped him in his tracks. No doubt about it; she had Jim trained.

On an impulse she told Clara about it.

"You can have it," Clara said shortly.

Joy bit her tongue with vexation. The poor kid was jealous. She came from a prim family and circulated in a prim, supervised crowd of young people. Right now she was probably thinking, or half-thinking, that Joy was taunting her with her superior charms.

"Gee, kid," she said unhappily, not knowing where to begin.

To her relief Clara laughed. "You fat-headed glamorpusses," she said cheerfully. "You think a girl can't get a date unless she's as pretty as you-all. The fact is, any girl can get a date and can get as much smooching as she wants from the age of thirteen on. I don't happen to want any right now, thanks. I tried it out of curiosity and I found out it kept me awake after I got home, and made me feel grubby. I kept trying for a while looking for a perfect lover—in Pittsburgh—and the only thing I learned was that some of them start at the top and the rest of them start at the bottom. And they all kept me awake and made me feel grubby. So I stopped. Don't pity me, roomie; I know what I'm doing. I just don't think it's worth it, not unless it's going to amount to something. And that I'm not ready for."

"Scared?"

"No. I've read all the books, I'm not deformed, so there shouldn't be any particular trouble. I'm just not ready for it. Why complicate your life? I like a good medium-rare steak, but I'm willing to wait until one turns up; medium-rare steaks aren't all there is to life. Neither is—you know what."

"You'll wait until hell freezes over before a good medium-rare steak comes along in the Academy dining room," Joy commented. There was no answer. In a lower voice she said, "I'm scared—a little. It seems like such an intimate thing."

Clara choked back a guffaw; it managed to come out as a cough. "If you're scared," she said, "you'd better stay out of Dr. Henschel's convertible. Sometimes those things develop into things a girl can't handle."

"Pooh-pooh," said Joy. "Never underestimate the power of *this* woman, roomie." She reached over and turned out the light. "Night," she said.

"Night."

IX

ANN RIKER said, "How perfectly dreary of you, pet. Imagine ruining a nice rainy Sunday by going to church!"

"It's a matter of the Commandments," said Kathryn, trying to get her powder on with the light touch Ann had taught her, conscious of the other girl's eyes on her.

"Well!" Ann sat up and closed her book; she had been coiled like a kitten, like a carefully rehearsed and barbered kitten, on the window seat. "I didn't know you were quite so—so mediievally devout, if you'll excuse the expression."

"I take from a different firm," Kathryn explained. "I'm referring to the Commandments from Dr. Matthewson: 'Thou shalt show up in chapel, whatever your sluttish instincts may dictate, or I'll know the reason why.'" She stood up and hesitated at the closet, finally reaching for her own trench coat, with only the one small frayed place around the belt buckle.

"Now, Kathryn—"

"All right, Ann." Kathryn took the other coat, the one that Ann had insisted on ordering for her. "Oh—I may miss dinner. I mean lunch. Avis Lesoeur wants me to go into town with her."

She walked briskly across the campus, wondering again just why Avis wanted any such thing. But want it she evidently did. She had come around that night to suggest it; she called up the sorority house the next day to confirm it; she had sent a message by one of the girls that very morning to remind Miss Jackson that Miss Lesoeur would pick her up at chapel.

But maybe she just wanted to be nice.

All through chapel Kathryn tried to keep that in mind: Maybe she just wanted to be nice. When she came out and found Avis, sitting on the edge of the seat of a cab, she was nearly convinced.

"Get in," Avis said nervously. "Let's get out of here before somebody else wants—oh, God."

A voice was squalling, "Ad! Ad Simmons! Wait for us!" Two sophomores came pounding up through the rain, peered inside, said brightly, "Oh, hi, Avis. Mind if we come along? Say, this is hell's own luck, finding the cab here. We thought we'd have to go out and *hitch-hike*."

"Delighted to have you," said Avis in a brittle tone. The two girls climbed on the jump seats and yacked at each other all the way in. Kathryn, sitting beside Avis, cleared her throat a couple of times as a preliminary to conversation; but Avis was leaned back, head turned, looking remotely out the window at the Pennsylvania hills.

The girls on the jump seats got out in front of the town's one movie theater and tried to compute their share of the fare, but Avis grandly refused. Thank heaven for that much, thought Kathryn, who had memorized the total of singles, quarters and dimes in her bag; evidently this was going to be Avis's treat. Whatever it was going to be.

It turned out to be lunch at a roadhouse just the other side of town. Avis had suddenly bloomed; where she had been nervous or sulky or something not yet diagnosed, she became cheerfully gracious.

"It isn't much," she told Kathryn as a hostess in a cornflower corsage seated them at a table. "But it's the best Eleusis has to offer. Now we can have a good, long talk."

The hostess spread cardboard menus before them and Kathryn examined the prices. It better be Avis's treat, she thought wryly. How did a highway joint outside of Eleusis, Pennsylvania, get the notion it could copy the Stork Club's prices? Two-fifty for pot roast!

She said candidly, "This is murder, Avis. I can't afford this kind of—"

"On me, Kathryn." Avis was winningly cheerful about it. Good enough, thought Kathryn critically; it's just as well we got that straight.

Avis was happily ordering for both of them, but all of a sudden Kathryn wasn't listening.

Hey, Jackson! she told herself sharply. Look at you! Uncle Ben spent fifteen years on relief, and borrowed cabbages from

his neighbor's truck patch every summer; and Uncle Ben would be mighty proud of you today.

"Is something the matter?"

Kathryn looked up. "No—nothing," she said with an effort. But something certainly was the matter; how long had she been at this school—not yet three weeks? And what had become of the girl who said fiercely, "They say Pooles are corrupt and crooked and parasites—but it isn't true of me!"

Avis was saying, "For a minute there, I thought—I mean, the reason I wanted to talk to you— No, I guess not."

Kathryn made an effort to follow the conversation. Time enough to work out this other thing later. "What?"

Avis said, "Eat your lunch, honey. When we're finished maybe old rabbit ears here will drift out of earshot for a minute. I—I want to ask you about something."

The waitress brought the coffee and the check, and left. The hostess drifted over to inquire politely about the lunch—and left.

Avis put down her cup and took a deep breath.

"Well," she said, "this is my problem. I, uh—I'm a little, well, late." She tried a smile. It looked like a clumsy scar on the sweet, round face.

Kathryn said carefully, "Do you mean—" Avis nodded. She managed a wry, woman-of-the-world shrug to go with the smile, but it broke down. She stared at the window, no longer smiling, hardly audible, and said, "Fi-five weeks. I thought maybe I'd made a mistake, so I checked back—I remembered I had to call off a dance at the country club, the last time—and the last time was July. August. September. Five weeks late. And—and I was wondering why the breakfast coffee was so *vile* this year, and all the time—"

She was weeping, her face still turned to the window.

Kathryn said from the heart, "Avis, that's awful!"

The girl shook her head despairingly. "You don't know," she said. "It—it wasn't even anybody I *knew*, Kathryn. I mean, there he was at the Holcombs', one of Jerry Holcomb's house guests, and he looked perfectly fine. And then it got pretty late and we went to this place and they wouldn't serve us unless we bought a bottle and took it to the rooms and—honestly, Kathryn, I was pretty drunk and he seemed

perfectly all right. I had no idea it was going to be anything like that." Her eyes were blank and haunted.

Of course you didn't, dearie; of course you didn't. Pure girls don't have to think about things like that, do they? Or they don't until the night they go to the thin-carpeted room with the painted iron bed in the flea-bag hotel—all perfectly innocent, and then they find themselves knocked up, as we Pooles put it in our inbred, coarse fashion.

But the girl was scared through and through. Kathryn said after a moment, "What about the—boy?"

"Rutgers," Avis said bitterly. "He and Jerry took off for the south of France the last three weeks in August and from there they went straight to school. I wrote him and he didn't answer. I phoned him. He said I couldn't pin anything on him. He said he could get six fraternity brothers to lie for him, to swear they'd done it with me too."

Kathryn took a deep drink of her cooling coffee, feeling sickly that she had been through all this so many times before. It hadn't happened to her—not even this role of comforting listener; but it was in the family heritage of the Pooles. She had heard about it more than once at second and third hand; it was a part of her normal environment: The Poole girl caught, the father—sometimes an heir of the Montrose aristocracy—safely in the clear.

Only this time the Montrose aristocracy was getting its own lumps.

"I'm dreadfully sorry to hear about all this, Avis," she began. "If there were anything I could do—"

The tear-stained face turned to her. "Will you? I'll pay anything, I still have my Easter check almost entire, and I'll be grateful to you forever, Kathryn."

"Wait a minute," Kathryn said evenly. "I don't understand you." But she was terribly afraid that she did.

Avis said in a rapid, confidential voice, "You don't have to be cagey with me, Kathryn. I laid my cards on the table; you don't have to fence. Who do you know?"

"You mean for an abortion," Kathryn stated.

Avis nodded impatiently.

"Nobody," said Kathryn. "Nobody at all."

"But you *must*," Avis said, her voice rising incredulously. "Everybody knows about—Poole Hollow."

The two words had been a last-minute substitution for another phrase, perhaps "you people," at the mildest.

Kathryn said, "I have an uncle who steals cabbages. My father won't work; he's a fishing fool. My mother has falling of the womb and my big brother spent most of World War II in the Disciplinary Training Barracks at Pisa for socking an M.P. But none of that means I'm a lazy, cabbage-stealing, cop-fighter with a prolapsed uterus. Sure, some girls get in trouble and get out of it with an abortion. I've even heard them mention a Mrs. Seeger or Steeger, but I don't know where she lives. What can I do?"

"Seeger? Steeger? Is she in Poole Hollow?"

"No. That much I know; there isn't any such person there. The cops wouldn't stand for it."

"She might," Avis said eagerly, "have a place in Murraytown."

"I don't know, I said. To me it's just a name and I haven't even got it straight."

"I could ask in Murraytown," Avis said. "You have to start somewhere and at least I have the name."

"Wait a minute," Kathryn said, horrified. "What kind of a person would she be, anyway? Some dirty old hag who could kill you by a slip! Avis, for Heaven's sake think it over. There must be real doctors you could go to in Montrose—"

Avis was shaking her head with a self-conscious smile. "It would get back to my folks," she said. "Here." She pressed a five-dollar bill into Kathryn's hand. "For your fare back. I can make the bus if I hurry; I'll pay on the way out." She glanced at her watch, scooped up her coat and was down the aisle before Kathryn could say a word.

Staring stupidly through the window Kathryn saw her flag down the bus in the nick of time.

The nick of time for what?

She went to the phone booth slowly and called Ad Simmons' home. His wife said she'd send him to the roadhouse as soon as he came back from his present trip.

The weekly officers' meeting of the Eleusis Academy for Women Chapter of Lambda Lambda Lambda took place that Sunday night in the Chapter Room, an unspeakably sacred place, according to the bylaws.

After disposing of a financial report, the Regent announced, "I've finally got the stuff from Washington on handling a transfer, so we can clear Sister Riker. It seems no initiation's necessary but there's something called Approbation of a Transferred Sister. I gather that means that we have to talk her over, decide she's a sterling character and then vote her in. We then notify her at once to end the suspense. She should be waiting outside for the verdict in—" She looked at her wristwatch, bright with diamonds. "In five minutes. How do we kill five minutes?"

"Who's got the dice?" asked the Treasurer, and there was a snicker.

The Regent thought that was in the worst possible taste. "Let us," she said stuffily, "proceed to the Approbation. The discussion will begin with the Junior Officer and go on with the rest of us in rising order."

The Junior Officer said, "Well, of course she's an awfully swell person. Beautifully dressed, very chic. We've all got a lot to learn from Sister Riker and I think she'll be an ornament to the chapter."

The Regent looked again at the letter from Washington. "If you have any complaints against her, you're supposed to speak up now."

The Junior Officer said frankly, "My only complaint is that she hasn't got any brothers or cousins in this part of the country to bring around."

She seemed to be finished. "Sister Recorder," said the Regent.

The Sister Recorder, a sharp girl named Janice Styles, rose and said, "I agree with the Junior Officer. She'll be an ornament to the chapter. I just wish she didn't make me uncomfortable. Well, that doesn't make sense. I'll strike it from the records."

The Junior Officer said, "Me too. I mean, she makes me uncomfortable."

The Regent said, "I'd consider those remarks frivolous and unworthy—if she didn't make me uncomfortable too."

"She's got a rotten temper," the Sister Recorder said. "It's greatly to her credit that she keeps it in check. I happened to be around when she laced into old Mrs. Peddy for not cleaning her room before she was back from classes."

"Old Peddy's too slow, all right," somebody said, "but she's not supposed to be a demon cleaning woman; she's practically a pensioner. Somebody should let Sister Riker know that in a nice way."

The Sister Recorder said, "A lady would know it without being told."

"Maybe things are different in California."

"Why did she leave, anyway?"

"With her dough she doesn't have to stay anyplace she doesn't like. I don't blame her; I'd travel around myself if the parents let me and I had the money. They do it all the time in Europe—one year one school, next year another school."

"That's to learn languages, stupid."

"Sisters!" the Regent snapped.

"And," the Junior Officer asked, emboldened, "who are these people she got us to pledge?"

"Gwynn and Squires are okay. They just got passed over last year because there were more eligible people. This year there are vacancies."

"Now explain this Jackson girl, Sister."

"Riker vouches for her personally—"

"And she's not even accepted in the chapter yet!"

"I was saying, Ann vouches for her personally and you know damn well, Sister, she'll be in the chapter in about five minutes, and besides we need a poverty member; we haven't had one for two years since Milligan graduated."

They all nodded wisely. To prove that they were not a snobbish institution for the children of the rich, the Lambs, whenever they could find anyone not impossible, elected *one* scholarship girl. Neglecting sensible measures like that gave sororities a bad name.

One sister said abruptly, "She told me she came from Encino. And I found out by chance that she told Sister Beckwith she came from Stockton."

"Oh, so what?"

"It's funny, that's all."

"She's a writer. All writers are absent-minded. I knew a boy on the *Yale Review* once—"

"I don't care if she's the entire editorial board of the *Yale Review* and the faculty advisor besides. She ought to know

where she came from. It's little things like that that make me uneasy."

"Would you vote against her, Sister?"

"Vote against her?" the sister demanded. "Who said anything about voting against her? Let's vote her in and get it over with. Aren't those five minutes up yet?"

The Regent said stubbornly, "Hold on a minute. This is for real. I don't want a vote, I want a show of opinion—how many of us think she makes them uncomfortable?"

Every hand went up—some at once, some after a moment's reflection.

"Well, what about that? Do we want a sister who makes us uncomfortable?"

"Maybe," said the Sister Recorder slowly, "we ought to write to the chapter in California. Only somebody will have to help me with the letter. I don't know what to say."

"Say it's a matter of routine," snapped the Junior Officer. "Who's going to know the difference? You think they're smarter about transfers than we are?"

"And what about Ann Riker?" demanded the Regent. "She's probably out there now."

The Junior Officer said unhappily, "I suppose you're right. Who told her we'd let her know today anyhow?"

The Sister Recorder said, "Let's not start figuring out who's to blame for what." She sighed. "Look, Sisters, let's bite the bullet and vote her in. After all—Lucille! What are you up to?"

The Regent said grimly as she headed for the door, "Sit still, all of you. I'm going to get her in here—tell her we want to verify a couple of facts before we consider her application. And let's all take a good, long, careful look at her."

She returned with Ann before the sisters had a chance to get nervous. "Sister Riker," she said formally, "we have to get the vital statistics for the Chapter Scroll before we vote. Do you mind?"

Ann said gravely, "Of course not, Sister Regent. I was born in Encino, but the family is originally from Stockton. My father believed in traveling around. I suppose I follow the family tradition."

The Sister Recorder coughed and read off the details of birth date, height, weight, parentage, and scholastic stand-

ing as taken from Ann's Student Register questionnaire. Ann verified them politely.

"Thank you, Sister," said the Sister Recorder faintly, and looked at the Regent for guidance.

Ann said, "While I'm here, may I say one thing?"

"Certainly," the Regent said, a little surprised.

"It's just this." Ann hesitated, and smiled. "I don't have to tell you how much I want to be here. But regardless of that, whether you let me stay or not, may I ask that you do the best and most open-hearted thing you can for Squires, Gwynn and Jackson? It isn't merely that I think they will bring honor to the Lambs—they will, but that's not the point. They *need* the Lambs." She looked at the floor and said, so softly that they could scarcely hear, "As a trustee brat I know what it is to need the Lambs, believe me."

The Regent patted Ann on the back as she closed the door behind her.

Waiting in the anteroom for the verdict, Ann sat properly erect and managed to keep her face properly grave. She even managed to look grateful and astonished when, a moment later, the Regent beamed out of the door and called her, "Sister." But it wasn't really a surprise. Ann was a girl of very acute hearing.

X

THE Second Commandment was: "Thou shalt take a healthy, normal, girlish interest in athletics."

So Kathryn grimly turned up for volleyball, for basketball, for field hockey. It was a damned annoyance and it kept her from Suetonius, but it was Dr. Matthewson's school after all.

Besides, there were compensations. It wasn't every day that a Poole Hollow girl got to throw a body block at her social superiors.

As she limped in from Saturday-morning practice in the gym, Ann Riker said, "My God! *Now* what?"

Kathryn fingered her lip. "This? You ought to see the other fellow." She examined it in the mirror; it *was* pretty grotesquely swollen. "That's one thing about a women's college," she said cheerfully. "Doesn't matter how you look."

"I've noticed you feel that way," Ann sniffed. Kathryn shrugged and went into the bathroom. Ho, thought Ann, we're still emancipated, are we? She counted back: Saturday, Friday, Thursday—ever since last Sunday. Six solid days during which Kathryn, who had been coming along in a gratifying way, had suddenly reverted to type. Ann was excellent at what the tacticians call a "disengaging movement." After the first sharp interchange she had been careful not to insist when Kathryn wore her own drab rags instead of the really nice things Ann had given her, careful not to criticize or interfere. And she was careful not to ask, though she would have given anything to know, what had happened last Sunday.

Avis Lesoeur had something to do with it. Avis had "eaten a bad clam" in a restaurant in Murraytown on Saturday afternoon, and what she had been doing there God only knew. She had phoned in to say she was too sick to return on Monday; the System had loyally covered up her absence from the faculty; for each class she cut there had been a girl present to say that Avis had been taken queasy and thought she'd go lie down for an hour. Avis had tottered in on Tuesday morning, really looking like the wrath of God. But she hadn't been shaky enough to respond to Ann's probing. For once Ann had come up against a defense she could not penetrate. Somehow the bad clam tied in with her little Kathryn, who was again formal, independent, unreachable.

Kathryn came out of the bathroom wrapped in a towel, explained, "Sorry; forgot the robe," and disappeared into the bathroom again dragging the robe behind her.

Ann Riker took a very deep breath. Poor-white, nigger-Indian or Chineese, the girl had a splendid figure. Patiently, Ann, she counseled herself. Patiently. There's plenty of time.

Kathryn came out again in sweater and skirt.

Ann Riker shook her head ruefully at her. "It won't do," she said sadly. "Not for the Faculty Tea."

That was the reception for the faculty soon to start downstairs.

Kathryn gulped. "I haven't got a dress clean. I wish somebody'd told me. What happens if I don't show up?"

"The sisters hang you from the yardarm, dear. Let me lend you something nice, just for this afternoon." She strode to her closet and flung the door open dramatically. "This little number," she said, picking out a dress, "will do things for Madame's eyes—"

In spite of herself Kathryn laughed. Minutes later she was slipping into it and thanking Ann for her kindness.

The downstairs rooms of the Lambs House had been dressed for the occasion; as the senior sorority they gave the first tea of the term. It would be well attended; all the Lambs were obliged to be present, and Dr. Matthewson saw to it that all the faculty was there. Occasionally there were parents, and the girls of DXK across the Mall were this once allowed to come and mingle with their betters. There was even some hope that the great John G. Anson, M.D., head of the great Anson Clinic and head of the Academy Board of Governors, would be present.

And, at about 3:30, the great Dr. Anson, a tired, shaggy and powerful bear of a man, was passing through the town of Eleusis on his way to the Academy.

He told his chauffeur after a glance at his watch, "Slow down. Take about five minutes to get there."

"Yes, sir."

Anson closed his eyes and leaned back against the soft leather upholstery of the Lincoln limousine. He had been working hard all through the 125-mile trip from the Clinic to Eleusis; paper-work in a car or on a train was always doubly tiring, and he wondered exactly why that was. Might put one of the youngsters in Physiology on it, he thought. Fersen isn't doing at all well with the osteomyelitis thing; take him off and put him on it.

It had been a good afternoon's work: the quarterly budget, the statistician's report on local population trends and what they'd mean to the Clinic—for one thing, they meant that he'd better have a full-fledged Department of Gerontology going by 1960, with twelve beds to start—the architect's tentative plans for the new wing, review of the applications for

the open staff spot and a decision on who got it. A good afternoon's work and now, he hoped, some recreation.

He liked the Academy. Hard-driving with his staff and employees, he was soft about the Academy. It had been a great moment when, twenty-five years ago, they asked him to join the Board of Governors. It had been even a greater one when, ten years ago, they elected him head of the Board. It was proof that a kid from a prairie town had made it. Money wasn't proof; Dr. John G. Anson was sometimes honestly amazed that people were poor, because making money was such an easy trick. You provided something for which there was a need; you saw an opportunity and you took it; that was all there was to making money.

But to be looked up to as the head of the venerable Academy was bliss. He was uneasily aware that he might, perhaps, spend more time on the actual business of the Academy; Board meetings were very little more than a yearly formality. But, he chuckled silently, good old Dr. Matthewson kept the place running. Indeed she did!

"We're here, sir," the chauffeur said softly after a glance into the mirror.

"Thanks, Whipple." He sat up straight, set his Homburg square on his head and fingered his tie. The car turned in at the gate and rolled slowly down the Mall, between the beloved old buildings, passing the fresh, pretty girls, and the great man was happy.

They stopped in front of the Administration Building; the chauffeur popped out and opened the rear door. As Anson was getting out the angular form of Dr. Matthewson came stilting down the steps.

"Good afternoon, Dr. Anson!" she caroled.

"Hello, Mildred. You don't have to come and meet me; I'm not royalty."

"The nearest thing, my dear man, that we have to royalty in our wonderful country," she rejoined. "The royalty of achievement, the royalty of talent, the royalty of integrity. All are yours."

He felt a small lump in his throat. A tribute from *her*—

He asked gruffly, "How's the otosclerosis?"

"Progressing," she said with a shrug. "I'm wearing out a bit at a time, some of me going before the rest. Without the

wonderful treatment at the Clinic, who knows? But that's enough; you know already that I think it's the finest medical center in the country. Not that my opinion matters, except that it's held by every really competent authority."

"Pretty good shop we run," he said. "Pretty good." Inside he glowed. How little people understood and appreciated his work and the work of his staff. Last month in the *Journal of the American Hospital Association* there had been an ugly, uncalled-for dig in a letter to the editor; the word "rapacious" was used and he was almost certain it meant the Clinic. But if he wrote the stiff reply that was indicated he'd just be spreading the thing. He didn't understand how the *JAHA* people could have been so careless. A man deserved to be paid for his work, didn't he? Mildred understood that and didn't hesitate to say so.

"Like me to drive you to the Lambs House?" he asked.

"Thanks, no, Dr. Anson. You're considerate and courteous as always, but shall we walk?"

"Wait," he told the chauffeur, and they walked down the Mall. Dr. Matthewson was evidently feeling chatty: she was at her garrulous best. She was a great scholar, Dr. Matthewson, and a great lady. It was very pleasant to be her confidant and to stroll down the venerable Mall. Not bad, he thought, for a kid from a prairie town!

Dr. Matthewson smiled and said, "We have our little ups and downs, unlike your own great institution. But then I'm a rattle-pated old woman and you're a vigorous man in the prime of life." Maybe ten years difference between us, she thought, but he does have a sort of peasant vitality to go with his peasant stupidity. "The girls will be so happy to see you, Dr. Anson—I didn't promise them definitely, you know. I'm well aware that in your hands is the responsibility for two hundred and fifty lives—and very capable hands they are, I might say! The burdens of your profession are noble, but heavy." Her sweeping eye took in Miss Jane Driscoll, freshman, Liberal Arts, as she passed eating a chocolate bar. She'd get her tomorrow for *that*. No *lady*, Miss Driscoll, is ever seen munching a confection as she saunters along. . . . "It's awfully kind of you to pay this call, Dr. Anson." She smiled

roguishly up at him. "As the girls say, it will *make* the party!"

They entered the Lambs House and the Regent was there to shake their hands and burble delight at the honor. The young ladies of LLL and DXK were mostly there, some of them fearfully overdressed and many wearing too much makeup for the afternoon, thought Dr. Matthewson. She'd put up something on the bulletin board.

And then her eyes popped. Kathryn Jackson, freshman, Classical Language and Literature, scholarship, nigger-Indian halfbreed, was on the sofa demurely sipping tea and chatting with the unspeakable Mr. McGivern!

"Like it here?" Mr. McGivern asked bluntly.

"It's tough," she said. "I like the luxuries fine, the nice rooms, eating in the Lambs dining room instead of the school slopshop. I didn't know there was so much, well, responsibility, with it. I have to watch myself like a hawk. Table manners are a little different, and that little difference is a big difference if you don't know which saucer to drink your tea out of."

"I mean the other girls. Are you getting along with that Ann Riker?"

Kathryn said, "No hair-pulling anyway. She's really very nice, or tries to be." Her eyes drifted around the room and she sat up straighter. She whispered, "Ten-*hut!*"

Dr. Matthewson was entering the room with a Distinguished Stranger. McGivern squinted past the screen of sorority officers and seniors who were dashing like corvettes around the old battlewagons.

"Dr. Anson," he murmured. "Anson Clinic. *The* Anson Clinic, that is. Head of the Board of Governors."

Kathryn said nervously, "I wish I'd known he was coming. My hair—"

"Child, he doesn't know you're alive. Now calm down and tell me about Miss Riker." McGivern set a good example to the troops by turning half around on the couch, back to the entrance, and calmly sipping his tea. All the same, there was a prickling between his shoulder blades.

"Well," Kathryn began, looking past him, "she—uh—she's very helpful. I mean, really very helpful. For instance, my

hair was a terrible mess—you just can't get it right with a home permanent if you've got the kind of greasy steel wool I have—and Ann showed me how to brush it and set it. She even helps me brush it. And then—" She stood up convulsively. "Good afternoon, Dr. Matthewson," she said.

Dr. Matthewson gave her a toothy and unconvincing smile. "Surely you remember Mr. McGivern, Dr. Anson."

"Of course. Good to see you again, McGivern."

McGivern got up, creaking. Now, what the hell do I do with the teacup? he asked himself. He transferred it, clattering, to his left hand and shook hands with Anson. At least, they wouldn't stay. It was always like this. One grand processional around the room, and then Matthewson would conduct her royal visitor to the prize seat at the fireplace. And then you could settle back to being bored with whatever undergraduate happened to be handy.

But they did stay. It is said that Queen Victoria never looked behind her for a chair. She merely sat—and her courtiers made sure that a chair was always there. Dr. Matthewson, ruling a smaller empire, glanced absently at the end of the sofa, and Kathryn leaped aside, while the Regent and the Junior Officer rushed up with refreshments.

Kathryn caught McGivern's eye and they started to melt away.

"No, no, my dear!" cackled Dr. Matthewson. "I'm sure Dr. Anson would like to meet one of our younger undergraduates—especially one of your talents."

Kathryn hesitated, and sullenly sat on a hassock just below the throne. "There," said Dr. Matthewson roguishly. "Isn't that an attractive sight, Dr. Anson? So young, so attractive. And so accomplished, even at her tender age. Why, Dr. Anson—you must forgive me, my dear, if I tell this one little story on your, er, progenitors. It seems that, ever so long ago, before the War between the States, a certain number of slaves made their way—"

McGivern had absolute pitch as far as Dr. Matthewson's moods were concerned. It was going to be pretty bad, he told himself as he dawdled purposefully out of range.

He heard a small laugh from the group clustered around Dr. Matthewson, but didn't look back. "Mind if I join you,

Henschel?" he asked, safely on the other side of the room. He smiled vaguely at the undergraduate Henschel was talking to—not that blonde, for a change; evidently Henschel was being discreet while Matthewson was in the room. "Hemingway, you said?" he demanded, clutching at the conversation. "A great journalist. I remember back in '21, before anybody talked about Hemingway and novels back on the old *Globe-Record*—"

He constructed an imaginary reminiscence for them. Never mind the glazedly polite expressions, never mind what they were thinking inside. The important thing was to keep talking. Whatever Matthewson was working up to, he didn't want to hear it.

Ann Riker had cornered Avis Lesoeur under the Founder's Portrait and was determinedly chipping away at her defenses. It wasn't easy, but Avis was clearly wobbly about something. Her face was pale, even under the powder base and rouge; her eyes looked as though she hadn't slept for a week; she was slumped back against the chair in spite of Dr. Matthewson's eagle eye and well known views on posture.

"More tea, Avis?" she asked solicitously. "You look as if you could use it."

Avis mumbled, "Thanks, but don't bother with the hostess bit. I'm perfectly capable of—"

"Be my guest," said Ann, and imperiously flagged old Mrs. Peddy, stumbling about the room pushing the tea cart. "No, no!" she said sharply as Mrs. Peddy started to pour. She took the teapot out of the creature's hand; heavens, couldn't the old beast get it through her crude skull that servants didn't pour at teas?

"Vile woman," she said to Avis, of the departing Mrs. Peddy, whose head twitched at the words. "But what can you expect around here? I suppose you have the same problem in Montrose, trying to find suitable servants."

"Oh, always," agreed Avis brightly. She put down her teacup with a rattle. "Ouch. Damn stuff's hot. In fact, they keep this place like a hothouse all around."

Ann was full of sympathy. "I don't dare open a window. Dr. Matthewson might turn to dust and blow away. I wonder

what she's giving our mutual friend Jackson a hard time about."

Avis gave her a quick look and tasted her tea again. "Well," she said, "I wonder what time it's getting to be? These damn things are supposed to break up at five." She glanced at her wrist, remembered and said nervously, "Do you know?" That was going to be a drag, when she finally had to write her father that the watch was "lost." She only hoped that that old witch Seeger had enough sense to pawn it out of the county.

"Oh, it's only a quarter past four," Ann said. "Tell me about Montrose. Isn't that near where Jackson comes from?"

"It's in the same county."

"I suppose you knew each other?"

Avis choked on her tea. Ann stared at her, a little alarmed; it looked as though the girl had started out to laugh and then, in the middle of it, stopped short. Now she seemed to be listening attentively, a little worriedly, to some inaudible voices far away.

"Oooh, that tea," she said after a moment, attempting a smile. "I think it was a mistake." She seemed wrapped up in the contemplation of some phenomenon inside herself. She tottered to her feet, clutching her bag. "Which way is the little girl's room?"

Ann said, "Why, there's one right down the hall, just past the dining room. Can I—"

"Thanks," mumbled Avis, starting to leave. Then she quivered. "Oh, my God," she whispered, and sped away.

Ann gazed after her. She glanced around the room; apparently nobody else had noticed anything. Maybe it really was a bad clam, she thought, or maybe—

She shook her head, baffled. After a moment she drifted down the hall herself. She passed slowly by the door, hesitated at the end of the corridor, came back. The door told her nothing. She heard nothing, though she had usefully acute ears.

She shrugged and went back to the tea. Something appeared to be going on.

McGivern had not, after all, been able to stay away.

He wasn't the only one. The group around Matthewson

and Anson, and around their captive satellite, Kathryn Jackson, had grown to nearly a majority of the occupants of the room. McGivern moved in, repelled and fascinated, listening.

Matthewson was tinkling away. "—so he said, 'Jedge, Ise gwine—' forgive me, Miss Jackson; I simply cannot reproduce that inimitable Poole accent. 'Ise gwine back home an' sharpen up mah ole razor till dat sheet dries out, an' if it dries out *soft* Ise gwine to shave!'"

Scandalized laughter from the undergraduates, sycophantic chuckles from the faculty members present.

Kathryn Jackson knew only this: that Dr. Matthewson had deliberately and in succession told three of the Poole stories that had for generations been handed down in Susquehanna county to demonstrate the mental and moral imbecility of her people, that she had told them in cold blood and commanded her presence. She knew that she wasn't going to stand for it. She knew that she would tell off Dr. Matthewson as a liar.

And then she would be expelled and her budding career would go down in ruins.

With her teeth set she began, "Dr. Matthewson—"

McGivern slapped his knee and chortled, "That's a good one!"

"Dr. Matthewson," she said again in a small, cold voice.

"Yes, my dear?" Dr. Matthewson asked brightly, turning, birdlike, to her.

McGivern said loudly, "Reminds me of one I heard the other day." And he gave Kathryn Jackson a look that silenced her. "There was this old maid on the train," McGivern said loudly. "An awful old prune; skinny as a rail, which was surprising since she always stuffed herself when it didn't cost her anything."

Dr. Matthewson put down her plate and its liberal collection of petits fours. With a shaking hand she sipped at her tea.

"Well, sir," McGivern went on heartily, "since this was in the old days, train robbers stopped the train and swarmed into the car where the old maid was. The leader yelled, 'Hands up, everybody! We're going to rob all the men and rape all the women.' And the brave conductor said, 'Oh, no you don't!' And then the old maid piped up. She said, 'Con-

ductor, you leave that man alone. Is he telling you how to run your railroad?" "

There was a deathly silence. McGivern immediately went on, "And there's another one—you ever hear about the three old maids who went for a tramp in the woods? Get it?" He nudged the nearest set of ribs, which belonged to a chemistry teacher. The man shrank away as from a leper.

Dr. Matthewson walked away and the group drifted after her until there was nobody left at the sofa but Kathryn and McGivern. She said to him, "You shouldn't have done it. But—thanks."

"Done what?" McGivern asked. "Just told a couple of jokes. We Irish are great wits, you know. Yukking it up all the time." But his face was ashen and he was scared. It was too soon; after he had his book finished he could speak up, but this had been too soon. Maybe she wouldn't fire him; she'd be hard put to find grounds, and a firing in the first ten days of classes was almost unheard of. Still, God help him, he was scared to death and glad he'd done it.

Ann Riker joined them for a moment. "So glad to see you outside class, Mr. McGivern," she smiled. "Here you can't tell me 'Cut out the embroidery and tell the story!'" She imitated his gruff voice nicely and Kathryn gave out a tremulous laugh.

"And here," said McGivern, "you can't tell me, 'Are you presuming to criticize a writer who's published in the *New New Review* and has a novel contracted for by Fisher and Fisher?'" "

"That happened exactly *once*," Ann Riker said with pretty indignation, "and only because I lost my temper and it's quite all right to lose one's temper in a seminar; that's what they're for."

"I've often wondered," McGivern said politely. He looked blankly around him, sighed, and walked off.

Ann stared after him. "What do you suppose is the matter with him? I couldn't smell anything on his breath. But the girls say he—"

"Please, Ann." Kathryn thought of going after the old man. But what was there to say? He had drawn fire from

her, and naturally that made him the target for whatever Dr. Matthewson might bring to bear.

Ann was saying pettishly, "Another mystery, I suppose. Honestly, Kathryn, this place is the limit. First Avis disappears—and after that ridiculous story about the clam. And now—"

"What was that about Avis?" Kathryn asked absently.

"Just that she's disappeared." She had Kathryn's full attention now. "She looked as though she was about to faint, and she positively *raced* to the washroom. And now she's gone. Honestly, Kathryn—"

"Excuse me." Kathryn swept away and surveyed the politely murmuring throng. The tea was breaking up; Avis wasn't in sight. Kathryn asked a couple of girls. No, no one had seen her; and Kathryn was fairly sure she hadn't slipped out.

It was possible she was still in the powder room.

She went down the corridor and looked in the door. There were a couple of DXK's primping before the mirror.

"Don't mind me, girls," said Kathryn. "Have you seen Avis Lesoeur in here?"

"No," they said shortly, and left.

It was a puzzler. Could she have sneaked out through the back door because she felt ill and didn't want to be a drag?

One of the cubicles was locked. "Avis?" she called tentatively.

No answer. She said grimly, "Whoever's in there, answer me, please!" No answer—unless faint, ragged breathing was an answer. The hell with it, she thought, and bent down. And then she saw the trickle of blood.

She looked around. There was a sand-filled metal urn for cigarettes. She toppled it over swiftly, upended it to dump out the sand and smartly swung it against the door where the latch was. The door sprang open. It was Avis who was inside, slumped on the seat and soaked with blood from the waist down.

Kathryn said viciously, "Damn fool!"

She dashed out and raced down the corridor and through the crowded room, leaving a fluttering wake of what-in-the-worlds. Dr. Matthewson and Dr. Anson were just leaving, amid a cloud of farewells.

She shoved through the twitter and gripped the big man's arm.

"Girl bleeding in the powder room," she snapped at him. "Very bad. Come on."

She yanked him through the crowd. His face was bewildered for a moment, then a doctor's face, impassive. She flung open the door of the powder room for him and followed him in.

He took only one glance at the slumped figure, then eased her to the tiled floor, careless of his clothes. He turned her sodden skirt up, placed his fist carefully in the pit of her stomach and pressed it in powerfully, leaning with all his weight.

Dr. Anson snapped at her, "Get some gauze and some ice, then call for plasma and a transfusion set-up."

By then the corridor was crowded. "Keep back," Kathryn said. "You, there, run like hell to the nurse's office and come back with gauze bandages, lots of them. Tell the nurse to come running. You go to the dining hall and get a bucket of ice. Fast! Let me through."

She made her way to the phone. When the operator came on she snapped, "This is the Academy. We have a girl bleeding to death. Get me a doctor's office fast."

The first doctor was at a home delivery. The second was on vacation. The third was in. Kathryn said, "This is the Academy. We have a girl hemorrhaging to death. Uterine. Come out and bring plasma and a transfusion apparatus. There's a doctor here but he doesn't have equipment."

The doctor said, "You don't want me. You want the emergency truck. But I'll come out. And I'll call them; they'll be there before me."

Time lost. Kathryn leaned dizzily against the doorframe. Time was all Avis had left in the world, and not much of that. "Damn fool," she said again.

She looked back down the corridor; by then the nurse had arrived.

Kathryn went out to the portico of the Lambs House and vomited endlessly.

While she was standing there, holding weakly to a pillar, Dr. Matthewson came up and glared at her. "Well, Miss Jackson. I suppose you've formed the usual Poole conclusions

about Miss Lesoeur's condition? The poor child! I warn you, Miss Jackson, if there is one breath of slander from you, one malicious word to anyone—anyone, you hear—you'll answer for it!"

She hobbled away. Kathryn clung to the pillar, trying to repress hysteria.

XI

DR. MATTHEWSON and the Regent together had cleared the corridor, and the Junior Officer was grimly standing guard. Joy moaned, "But she's my own *cousin*! My God, at least let me talk to her." She appealed to Clara. "Shouldn't they let me in? I'm next of kin. If she's dying—"

Clara led her aside and said coldly, "Shut up. Can't you see they're trying to hold the lid on this? Keep your mouth closed and you'll do her a favor."

Joy stared at her. "But—but do you think she—she—"

"Massive hemorrhage like that. What do *you* think? But if you keep your mouth shut, there's a chance it'll be all right. Go upstairs and get into bed. When the nurse comes out I'll try to get you a sedative or something if you need it."

She stood watching Joy climb forlornly up the stairs. The only possible doubt, she thought, was in the choice between abortion and miscarriage. Unless—she nearly laughed out loud—the poor kid had gone the whole way and, for heaven's sake, delivered a baby in the ladies' room of the Lambs House. . . .

She controlled herself and turned away, right into Dr. Crouch.

He said, "Miss Gwynn, there's nothing for us to do. Shall we set a good example to the others and get out of here?"

They were stiff with each other. Not so oddly, Clara thought, remembering the slap. He didn't seem to be angry, though. And he had asked her to come with him.

They walked across the Mall and sat on a stone bench.

In the late sunshine the green roofs of Old Eleusis looked pleasantly quaint. The flurry around the Lambs House was dying away—helped by Dr. Matthewson. Poor Avis, Clara thought. She may be dying. She may be dead. And outside here the sun is shining, and the only one who really cares very much is Dr. M.

Dr. Crouch cleared his throat. "Miss Gwynn, I ought to apologize—"

Simultaneously she started to say, "I really owe you an—"

They stopped and smiled at each other. Clara said, "It's really all my fault. I don't know what got into me."

"No," the man said earnestly, "it isn't. I've done a little thinking. Would you mind if I asked you to keep a confidence for me?"

"Why, of course not."

He said soberly, "Well, it isn't much of a confidence. It's only that for some time I've been—sensitive. Or maybe I don't mean sensitive, maybe I mean numb. That sounds silly, doesn't it?"

Doubtfully, "Well—"

"It is silly. Except to me." He rubbed his jaw, looking at her sidewise. "The thing is, I had a bad time a few years ago, and I more or less lost interest in everything. I—I didn't want to kill myself, exactly. But I didn't care much about living, either. And I took a sort of cowardly compromise and, well, the long and short of it is that I've been drifting."

He seemed to be waiting for her to say something, so she said, "I see."

He said regretfully, "I doubt that I'm making myself very clear. But what I'm trying to say is that you're right and I was wrong; and if you want any help I can give you on any kind of math—any kind at all—I'll gladly do what I can."

Clara had been speculating: So what was the "bad time?" Liquor? Women? Drugs? Caught with a choir boy? With his fingers in the till? But then what he had said penetrated.

He was astonished at the violence of her reaction. She turned in the seat and demanded, "Cantor? Hilbert? This peculiar number theory business? You'll help me with them?"

"As much as I can. Number theory—I think I can handle anything you want there. Though since the war they've had

those big computers to play with, and there's a lot I haven't kept up on. The others are out of my line somewhat, but I'll do what I can."

"How?"

"Well—" It had been a long time since he had thought of serious work, or seen a serious student, for that matter. He thought. "How about an hour a week as a starter? Call it a general discussion period; who knows, maybe I can even wangle credit for you, if Dr. Matthewson approves."

"Credit be damned," said Clara crudely. "I mean—I'm sorry, I didn't mean to swear. But it isn't the credit I'm after, Dr. Crouch. It's a funny thing. But somehow or other I seem to want to know more about mathematics. I've had these crushes before—there've been times when I got all swept up in something, and then six months later I'd forgotten all about it. But I want to find out what it's all about."

"We'll start next week," Crouch promised.

They got Avis to the first-aid room, the man from the emergency truck walking alongside, holding a plasma bottle that put fluid back into her veins nearly as fast as she was losing it. Anson walked on the other side of the stretcher, holding her wrist lightly, watching her face. Dr. Matthewson was bellwether, scattering undergraduates and faculty members before them.

She closed the door of the first-aid room on the party, glared the onlookers into cover and retreated to her administrative office.

Ann Riker was there. She stood up as Dr. Matthewson came into the anteroom. "One moment," Dr. Matthewson grated, and closed the door of her private room behind her.

She unplugged her hearing aid and sat down behind the rubbed desk to get her breath. These things distressed her. She glowered angrily at the peeling wallpaper; somebody was going to pay for this. Not Lesoeur, no. But somebody.

Having collected herself she cried shrilly, "Come in, Miss Riker." She screwed the plastic plug back in her ear. The Riker girl, she observed, was flushed and excited. So much the better.

She said formally, "Miss Riker, I asked you to step in because I want a favor of you."

"Of course," Ann said politely.

"You room with young Miss Jackson."

"Yes, Dr. Matthewson."

"I'm surprised," the old woman said. "I'm surprised that she has been accepted by our senior sorority and that a person of your breeding and fastidiousness should allow herself to be paired with such trash. I imply no criticism, my dear! I claim no jurisdiction over our sororities except the preservation of order. The sororities are our girls' first step towards self-government; the sororities are democracy in action. However, I presume that as her roommate and social superior you have some influence over her."

"Perhaps, Dr. Matthewson. I try to set a good example," Ann said gravely.

"*Noblesse oblige*. It is your duty to do so. I'm afraid I must tell you something rather painful, Miss Riker."

A frightening stab of apprehension went through the girl. She thought in torment: she knows; she's written to California and they've told her in spite of their hard-won promises.

"It is about Miss Jackson."

"Yes," Ann said, and studied the wrinkled, turtle-like face, reptilian in its impassivity. But was there a glint of vicious amusement in the ancient eyes?

"She is not the innocent *jeune fille* she would appear to be to your inexperience. She is of the gutter, Miss Riker; she is old in knowledge. Miss Lesoeur's unfortunate accident was unquestionably due to organic weakness; I have Dr. Anson's word for that."

Liar! What plot are you weaving around me?

"But to the impure," sighed Dr. Matthewson, "all things are impure. I imagine that little Miss Jackson, drawing on extensive and perhaps personal experience, fancies that Miss Lesoeur's trouble is—culpable."

Coldly alert, Ann nodded, wary of traps.

"You must come to me, Miss Riker, if you hear of the Jackson girl spreading canards. I have a short way with those who slander the Academy."

"I will, Dr. Matthewson," Ann burst out. Be loyal, be faithful, be true as old dog Tray; pull the wool over the old reptile's glassy eyes and get out of here and laugh.

"And watch McGivern," Dr. Matthewson added in a voice like the closing of a trap.

"I beg your pardon?"

"*Watch McGivern.* You are in his seminar. You will come to me and report any incident of drunkenness, profanity, disloyalty or incompetence."

This was too much by far; let the old bitch settle her feuds by herself. "I'm sure I would, Dr. Matthewson," she said, very surprised, "but Mr. McGivern's classes are very interesting and useful. There hasn't been anything like what you mentioned—"

"Watch McGivern," said the steel-trap voice. And then Dr. Matthewson smiled. "My poor girl," she said gently. "Did you think I wouldn't write to California for a full explanation of the reasons for your dismissal, and did you really think they would not furnish them to me? My dear, I am fully aware that you emulated Sappho not only in your literary aspirations."

And that, thought Ann wearily, is the fanciest way I have ever been called a Lesbian. Half-heartedly she said, "It was all a misunderstanding. The girl withdrew her accusation. I have a written apology. I left school merely to avoid embarrassment."

"Yes," Dr. Matthewson cackled in high glee. "Yours, my dear. Yours." She stared at Ann, her face suddenly vicious. "*Watch McGivern,*" she said. And added in almost a whisper, "And for all I care, you may have a free hand with your little friend Jackson. It is amusing to contemplate. You may go now, Miss Riker."

Ann hurried out and down the Administration Building stairs, past Dr. Anson's black Lincoln limousine and the chauffeur patiently waiting.

A bad time was coming.

She went to a bench on the Mall and sat down stiffly. She had not had a *bad time* for months now. She had thought perhaps she never would again.

The *bad time* was the lifting of a veil between her and the world; it was the exposure of everybody in all their rottenness; it was a mirror in which she saw herself undefended against their sly plotting.

The question was, she realized suddenly and clearly, were

Jackson and Dr. Matthewson hand in hand? Nothing could be more likely. They had probably conferred endlessly, night after night, mapping the strategy by which they would destroy her, Dr. Matthewson the brains and Kathryn Jackson the willing hands. Why, it came to her in a flash, they had been conferring at the Faculty Tea! Why else the session at the couch, the bursts of laughter and the final breakup after agreement on their next step against her was reached?

She stood up abruptly and shook her head. "You're mad," she said almost aloud. Mad as a hatter. Kathryn Jackson is a naive and frustrated girl with inferiority feelings about her background. Dr. Matthewson is a wicked, thwarted old maid. It's inconceivable that they could be banded together against you; it's a crazy notion. They put away people who think things like that. *Get rid of it!*

But she knew it was perfectly true, that they envied her because of her beauty and talent and would stop at nothing to pull her down into the mud like the mad dogs they were. You shot down mad dogs; it was them or you.

Stop it! Stop it! Stop—

One of the girls from the journalism seminar was approaching.

"Hi, Riker."

"Hi, Sully," Ann said very coolly.

"What's this buzz about some girl at the Faculty Tea? You were there, you lucky Lamb."

"Nothing much. It was Avis Lesoeur, the big blonde horse from Montrose. She fainted."

"I heard there was a hemorrhage."

Ann grinned. "Sure. The kind of hemorrhage you get every twenty-eight days. Somebody panicked and called the emergency truck."

Sully snorted. "The kids around here! They said she was dying, they said the Lambs House was blood ankle-deep, they said—well, you can guess what they said."

"Some of the dirty-minded people there are in this world," Ann marveled. "Well, I was there and I know. Set anybody straight if you hear them yapping, will you? Just a bad case of cramps. Real bad."

"Got it. And thanks. See you in class."

And so, Ann thought, she was working for Dr. Matthewson after all. She had been drawn into the web.

You stepped on spiders.

Dr. Anson sat down heavily across from Dr. Matthewson, exhausted. "She'll pull through," he said. "We've got her packed and iced; the bleeding's stopped. That young fellow from town—what's his name?"

"Cornuto."

"Left him with her. Seems to be a very competent youngster."

"You were splendid, Dr. Anson. The great healer you've always been in spite of your heavy administrative burdens. Ah, would you like a glass of sherry?"

"Very good idea, Mildred. I haven't done any—" He shut his mouth abruptly; fortunately Mildred did not seem to have heard him. He'd been about to admit that this was his first case in perhaps eight years. It wouldn't have sounded well. And he *had* been sharp. Found the aorta abdominalis first shot, pinched it shut against the backbone fast and given the right orders.

Dr. Matthewson was exhuming a dusty decanter from a sideboard's cabinet; she poured a cut wineglass full and handed it to him. "My father's," she said of the wine. "The last of the Solera '82. It could not be more fittingly used than to refresh you after your heroic deed."

"Just doctoring," he grunted. "My job." And sipped the wine, all aglow.

She said, "And now that you've saved the body, it is up to me to save the character. Not an heroic task of course, nothing to compare with yours. But I must do it."

"Eh?"

"My dear Dr. Anson," she said soothingly, "I could not trouble you at the time. But I had to take steps to insure that there would be no gossip about the incident." She closed her catfish mouth. "There will be no gossip."

"But Mildred—"

"The Jackson girl, who found her, will spread no gossip," she mused. "The girl herself will be silent, of course. And the nurse is my own sister's dear niece. I am so grateful, Dr. Anson, that it can be kept so quiet. I should never

forgive myself, never, if any scandal attached to your name."

"To me?" he repeated, dazed.

"To the school of which you are head of the Board of Governors. I could never permit that to happen."

He swallowed his sherry uncomfortably. It hadn't occurred to him, but suppose—suppose this sort of thing did get in the papers. Make it as bad as possible: She wouldn't, but suppose the girl died. *Noted Surgeon to Testify in Abortion Inquest.*

He knew what the lay public thought of fine, flourishing private clinics like his own. Places where young girls went for "delicate" operations. Places where rich hypochondriacs were taken for whatever they had. Places where drunks were dried out and restored, temporarily, to duty. The lay public thought medicine should be a matter of socialistic, tax-supported free hospitals, with a policeman standing by the anesthetizer during operations. He had spent thirty years combatting the notion, and it could all be wiped out.

Unless, of course, he mused, he got up, right now, and walked out of this room, right now, and made the phone call to the local sheriff's office that would start an investigation. Then it would be *Noted Surgeon Flays Abortion Racket.*

But he could hardly do that to Mildred. He said suddenly, "Cornuto."

Matthewson fiddled nervously with her hearing aid. "I beg your pardon?"

"Dr. Cornuto. I'd better have a talk with him." He tossed off the rest of his sherry, bowed to Dr. Matthewson and left.

Dr. Matthewson grinned tightly at the door.

She peered hopefully into Anson's glass, but it was empty. That was disappointing, for the occasion really called for a drink. She had looked forward to this day; it was pleasant to spend an afternoon with Dr. Anson, and have him appreciate the many things she was trying to accomplish with the Academy. And it was glory for him too, of course. Dr. Matthewson was aware of the surgeon's hunger for honors—even such honors as Eleusis could bestow. I wonder, she thought suddenly, I wonder if perhaps at commencement, some simple degree, Humane Letters, for instance . . .

She filed the thought; time enough for an honorary degree if this affair blew over.

And it would. If Anson failed with that young Dr. Cornuto, she had her own methods. They would find, she thought gleefully, that she was not without friends in this town—in particular, Cornuto would find that the rents on his office and home could inconveniently rise.

She shook the dusty decanter carefully, so as not to dislodge the sediment in the bottom. Impulsively she poured herself half an ounce of sherry and raised it to her lips.

XII

KATHRYN Jackson raised herself from the bed and blinked at her roommate. "Oh, it's you."

Ann closed the door and snapped on the light. She felt much better. A long, quiet ramble around the walled campus, and the fear of the *bad time* was all gone. You see? That head-shrinker she had finally gone to—not the one in California, but the sensible, mature, *reasonable* psychiatrist she had found in New York—had been perfectly right. There is nothing to fear. You have certain—tendencies. But so have we all, and you don't *need* to be crushed by yours.

Ann said cheerfully, "Such a commotion. Want to talk about it, Kathryn?"

"No."

"All right with me." She hummed to herself, getting out of her clothes, into lounging pajamas. "You didn't miss a damn thing at the Refectory," she commented. "Worst meal I've ever had at the Lambs. I suppose Cook was in a flap about Avis. Honestly, Kathryn, I can't understand how so much excitement got started. The way the girls were talking you'd think she had dropped a litter at the very least."

Silence from the bed. Ann took the cover off her typewriter, slipped a sheet of manuscript paper in, and lit a cigar-

ette while she read over the last few pages of the novel. "Typing won't bother you, will it?" she asked absently.

"No."

"Sing out if it does." Ann riffled through Chapter Six, pausing to admire the knife-sharp sentence with which it ended. It had been a long time since she had done any work on the novel, she realized—and for no reason. But suddenly she felt like writing. She sat looking at the paper for a moment, then stubbed out her cigarette and began steadily to type.

It went well—as the head-shrinker had said. He counseled, "Use your opportunities. Your talent can be both therapy for you and a contribution to the world. The average man in a reverie is building up tensions and problems for himself, and he must eventually work them out on a physical level. But as a writer, your reverie is your work. Put it down on paper. Get it out of your system. Eh?"

It was the best four hundred dollars' worth of medical advice she had ever had, Ann thought contentedly as she typed.

The noise of the typewriter did bother her, after all, Kathryn realized. She looked up, and at that moment Ann turned her head and their eyes met.

Ann Riker grinned. "It was a humdinger of a day, wasn't it?"

"I hope I never live through another like it. Did you know I vomited after it was over?"

"Don't blame you. Maybe the Gambol will be a little more sedate."

"At least there'll be men present to take over if anybody decides to collapse."

"Yes," Ann said coolly.

Kathryn remembered there was something Mr. McGivern wanted her to tell Ann. "You'll like Gus," she said deliberately.

"Oh? And who may Gus be?"

"Gus Sprayragen. Don't laugh at the name; it's Pennsylvania Dutch, or started out that way. I'm asking him to the Gambol."

"Gus Sprayragen. From where?"

"The Lehigh car shops," Kathryn said. "We used to go together."

"How interesting," Ann Riker said. She turned back to her typewriter and Kathryn closed her eyes while the keys resumed their heavy thumping. The pace was furious.

Young Dr. Anthony Cornuto was lying awake beside young Mrs. Anthony Cornuto, who was sound asleep with a gratified smile on her plump, dark face. He had told her the wonderful news and she had congratulated him appropriately and enthusiastically.

It was wonderful news, he guessed, even though he hadn't told her there was a rider on it. He cursed himself silently in the darkness and wondered. He ought to be grabbing some sleep; it was a misty night and the chances were one of his asthmatics would phone before morning, choking and wheezing, and he'd have to dress and drive and give the patient a shot and go home and undress. . . .

This God-damned piddling routine, he raged in the dark. I won't be such a damned fool as not to take Anson's offer.

After fifteen minutes of close questioning the old man had said, "There happens to be an opening in my clinic, my boy, and I'm very much impressed by the way you've handled this case."

"Thanks very much, Dr. Anson—*what* did you say, sir?"

"I'm offering you an appointment on our staff. Internal medicine. It's ten thousand a year and a bonus based on a percentage of our annual profit. And—heh—no night calls, none of the stuff you catch in country practice. I see that appeals to you!"

"It does indeed, sir. I don't have roots down in Eleusis yet, the move won't be a sacrifice. Sir, I'm very pleased and honored."

"Good. Come and see us in about a week. Meet the staff. Look for a house in town."

"I will sir; I will. Uh—are you going now?"

"Yes."

"There's one thing. Who's the attending physician in the Lesoeur case, you or me? Of course if you want me to I'll contact the sheriff, but you were on the scene first—"

The old man looked at him long and piercingly before he

said, "I really think this is no concern of the police, Cornuto."

"I'm sorry to differ with you, sir; I realize you didn't have time to examine her properly, but I think that girl was illegally aborted."

Dr. Anson said slowly, from a great height, "I didn't have to examine her, young man. Not after some fifty years in practice. And it looked like spontaneous abortion to me."

"At her age?" Cornuto asked, astonished.

Dr. Anson took off his Homburg, sat down and leaned forward. "My staff members must possess discretion," he said, "and humanity. You say it's operative, I say it's spontaneous. Which is the humane view? Which spares a young girl weeks of anguish in the press and on the witness stand, a lifetime with a tainted reputation? Which tears down this wonderful school?"

"I see, sir," Cornuto said. "I—I agree with you."

"Put it down in your records as acute dysmenorrhea," Dr. Anson said. "I'll see you in about a week." He got up and left.

Cornuto, when he got home, had put it down as acute dysmenorrhea. He had seen cases almost that bad. And now in the dark he was cursing and wondering. The humane view or the right view? The one that glossed over a grimy-handed abortionist somewhere who might kill the next one, who might kill the next dozen?

But ten thousand a year to start and—

His phone rang.

"Dr. Cornuto."

"Doctor, it's my chest and throat," wheezed an old voice. "I can't seem to get my breath, it started about nine o'clock and I thought it might let up—"

"Who is this?" he asked.

"Mr. Calkins, 475 Winchester," wheezed the man, astonished that the doctor didn't recognize him at once.

"I'll be right over, Mr. Calkins. Sit still, don't exert yourself and don't smoke."

As he slipped into his clothes he thought grimly: That did it. It's not the ten thousand; it's the freedom from night calls. If I have to put down an illegal abortion as acute dysmenorrhea, I'll do it.

And he knew that he would, and that he had lost something beyond price.

Jim Henschel was reading Cyril Tourneur's *The Revenger's Tragedie* in his 1783 edition of Dodsley's Old Plays with a view to assigning it to his Elizabethan Lit class. The problem was, where could you get copies for the students? In spite of a good boost in the twenties from T. S. Eliot, nobody had yet done a modern edition of Tourneur. Maybe he could have a careful girl cut mimeo stencils from his copy and run them off.

There was a knock on the door, and he hoped it wasn't McGivern. By now McGivern would be slightly incoherent and subject to long pauses while he collected his thoughts.

It wasn't the old newsman; it was the bad-mannered Dr. Crouch.

"Hello," Henschel said, a little coolly. "Come in."

"Thanks. It's nothing special; if I'm interrupting anything—"

"It can wait."

Crouch came in and said after a long pause, "I'm afraid I was a little curt last time we met. I wanted to say I'm sorry. I've had things on my mind. They seem to be clearing up, I don't know why."

"Glad to hear it," Henschel said. He grinned and stuck out his hand. Crouch took it with embarrassment, said, "Hope I'll see you around. Won't keep you from your work any longer."

Henschel watched him go. Well, the guy was trying. His eye fell on a passage in the Tourneur:

Spill out her Blood, my lord, for Blood's a Physic

Most powerful for Melancholy . . .

He smiled. Maybe that was it. There had been enough blood spilled that day to drive out a lot of melancholy.

It had been quite a day, he thought, putting down the book and getting ready for bed.

XIII

WHAT PASSED for Hell Week at Eleusis was coming to a close. Kathryn Jackson was uncomfortably aware that she had missed the worst of it, since being in the Lambs House had protected her. Freshmen obeyed the silent rule in the refectory during Hell Week, but she had eaten with the Lambs. Freshmen were required to run errands for their seniors during Hell Week, but the Lambs House was well enough staffed so that her only obligation was to fetch an occasional pack of cigarettes. There was no bedmaking, no room tidying. Of course, she had had to go without makeup around the campus, but that was no problem.

The only thing was, at the end of Hell Week came initiation. The sororities inducted their new sisters; while the barbarians outside the pale looked enviously on. Kathryn had been well braced for the mild hazing of Hell Week, but the secret and mysterious ritual of initiation had seemed beyond her horizon, since she had been coldly certain she would never be tapped.

And then Ann came along.

Kathryn walked into the Lambs House after the last class on Initiation Day and was leaped on by a furious sister. "Go around the back way!" she yelled. Kathryn went; but she had caught a glimpse of elaborate preparations in the Common Room: Chairs lined up in rows, drapes over the windows, what could have been either a banquet table or a sacrificial altar.

She told herself resolutely: It can't be too bad. It's just a lot of nonsense that they make sound mysterious to scare you. Anyway, if it gets rough—if there's any paddling, say, or anything like that—you can always tell them to stuff the whole thing. You didn't *ask* to be in Lambda Lambda Lambda. If it hadn't been for Ann Riker, you could still be in the dorm, and you wouldn't have to worry about this

stupid rigmarole. Besides, what business was it of Ann's whether you got tapped for the Lambs or not? Why didn't she mind her—

Kathryn opened the back door and jumped in spite of herself. One of the sisters was standing there—which one, you couldn't tell, because she was masked and sheeted—with what appeared to be a broadaxe in her hand.

"The Guardian of the Lesser Gate bids you enter," said the figure menacingly.

Kathryn walked stiffly past and up the stairs to the room she shared with Ann. There were similar figures stationed on the stairs and in the halls.

It was all very silly, and all somehow worrisome. She opened the room door with a feeling of having found a haven. Ann wouldn't take this seriously, of course. She would be friendly and comforting, and that would be nice. Ann was always nice—or tried to be, Kathryn amended, entering the room.

But Ann wasn't there.

There was something on her pillow.

She bent over it. It was a book, bound with golden ribbon, sealed with scarlet wax; it had a blue leather cover on which were worked the Greek letters of the sorority. There was a white card tucked under the ribbon, and on it someone had scrawled in lipstick: *Do Not Open*.

She straightened up, sniffed, and looked around.

Tucked in the frame of the mirror was a note, in red ink, on Lambs' stationery. It said:

Novice, prepare yourself. Your Sacrificial Gown is waiting for you. Wear it as you meditate.

Mystified, she looked in the bath. Over the shower-curtain rod a white robe was hanging.

She put it on. It was wool, and not very comfortable.

She sat down and waited for something to happen.

In the Chapter Room Lucille Conyers was worriedly taking a last look at the most ancient and secret rite of initiation, as described in the Locked Book. Why, she moaned, oh why, had she waited until the last minute to memorize the sacred old words? She would botch it. She knew dismally that she was going to botch it.

She said wretchedly, "What time is it?"

The Junior Officer, who had had an accident to her Helm of Myrtle, snapped, "Nearly eight. We're late, of course. Lucille, can't you *please* help me pin this together?"

The Regent snarled, "No!" The Junior Officer glared at her briefly and then went back to the mirror. Never again, she vowed, would they give a nickel's worth of business to that beast of a florist in Eleusis. Was it so hard to make a simple headpiece that would hold together, for God's sake, for one lousy evening?

She managed to hook the broken pieces together with a bobby pin and looked hopefully at the mirror.

The Helm of Myrtle looked like a Marine's camouflage; it stuck out at all angles, and it was obviously, definitely, positively going to fall apart the first time she moved. "Oh, *God!*" moaned the Junior Officer, covering her face with her hands.

Joy breathed, "Clara, this is kind of *fun!* I mean, I know it's silly, but honestly, don't you get the feeling that it *means* something? After all, it wouldn't mean much to be a Lamb if there wasn't—"

The door of their room crashed open. An awful sheeted figure cried, "*Silence!*" The face was masked, but the eyes glared at them.

Joy grinned weakly, opened her mouth to apologize, thought better of it, smiled, got a menacing movement from the figure, and sat rigidly, solemnly still. Apparently that was what the figure wanted. After a moment it closed the door and withdrew.

Clara winked at Joy and put a finger across her lips. Well, she admitted to herself, it was kind of fun at that. Joy was right. Besides, she had been on the campus last year when the previous crop of Lambs were initiated, and she couldn't help hearing the gossip. It wouldn't be too bad. The initiates had been pridefully secretive about the exact ritual, but you had to expect that; and if it had been anything really *bad* they would have let it out. She thought briefly of Kathryn, and it occurred to her that there was a girl who might be a little worried. She hadn't been around the previous year; she didn't have a roommate who was go-

ing through the same thing with her; she was—face it, Clara—a little out of her depth in the Lambs anyway. But Kathryn was also a girl, Clara felt, who could take care of herself.

Joy was making an attempt at communication. Clara concentrated. Joy's mouth formed exaggerated words, "Do . . . you . . . think . . . we . . . can . . . go . . . to . . . the . . . bathroom?"

Clara shrugged and glanced at her watch. Two minutes to eight. Not much time.

"Better hurry up," she advised Joy silently.

In the Common Room, Ann had efficiently maneuvered herself into the front line of the gathered sisters. She had thought briefly of trying to crash the Cloister of Officers, but decided against it. They had stood for plenty from her, and would stand for plenty more, but not that. Anyway, this way she didn't have to learn the ritual or worry about handling the props.

Things were slightly different here, and on the whole she thought the College of the Pacific Lambs Chapter handled things better. In the College of the Pacific—but no; one didn't want to think of the place. One had to be on guard to keep from thinking about it and the outrageous conspiracy against her there.

The Regent opened the Regalia Case with a big brass key and the Recording Sister took out and passed around a dozen silver-plated torches ornately sculptured with scallop shells, clusters of grapes, ribbons and sheaves of wheat in the worst German style of the 1880's. Into the head of each torch cotton wool was wadded, and a sickening stench of lighter fluid attested that the Junior Officer had done her job of preparing the torches zealously.

The Regent wrinkled her nose, nervously fanned the air before her and said, "Let the novices be admitted."

The three girls were led in blindfolded.

"The night is dark," said the Regent.

The three nervously chanted the memorized reply, "Friends are a light in the darkness."

The Regent: "Welcome, friends; may you be worthy."

"Three steps forward," the Recording Sister hissed in her

ear. The Regent took three steps forward, looked blank, and went back for the Locked Book. She read from it for five minutes while boredom sifted down among them all, weighing on their shoulders and working into their throats so they wanted to cough, their noses so they wanted to sneeze.

"In the 10th year of the atomic era . . ." Lucille Conyers droned on, reading the precepts of a gentler day, urging on the novices such virtues as Diligence, Humility, Womanliness, Modesty and Field Hockey, warning them against Vacillation, Bad Temper, Pride of Place and Intemperate Language.

From time to time it was in the form of a question, and the novices said, "We do."

"Light the torches," said the Regent at last, and when the tall smoky flames were going, the lights were put out and the novices were allowed to remove their blindfolds.

They advanced to swear fealty to the Lambs, and then the awful moment came when the Regent revealed the secret locked in the sorority's name. She whispered in each girl's ear, "Lampa Latreuein Logos," and the deed was done, the stinking torches extinguished, the lights turned up, the sweltering novice robes gratefully peeled off and congratulations and greetings exchanged.

Joy was awestruck, Clara was keeping her opinion to herself, though the corners of her mouth twitched now and then, and Kathryn puzzled over the Greek of the Lambs' motto. It meant, judging by her smattering, "A torch to serve inward thought." The next question in her mind, was what did *that* mean?

But she forgot her puzzlement in a warm and sisterly kiss of welcome from Ann Riker.

XIV

JAMES MCGIVERN, waking up without difficulty out of the light sleep of the aged, remembered: This was the day his head rolled off.

He wasn't afraid any more, he was only astonished that it had stayed on his shoulders so long. Two weeks since his fatal attack of courage at the Lambs' tea, and Dr. Matthewson had yet to deliver the blow.

He scraped the white, thick stubble off his chin, dressed and went down to eat breakfast. "Morning, morning." He nodded to the other teachers. They barely paused in their conversations; it was known that Mr. McGivern didn't talk much in the mornings.

He ate a methodical breakfast and returned to his room, where he sat and watched the loud old clock. Dr. Matthewson had requested his presence at nine-thirty. An hour to wait.

He couldn't avoid going to his own execution, he thought, but he was damned if he'd get there ahead of time. Still, why had she waited so long?

It was possible—barely possible—that there had been so much excitement that day that it had driven it out of her mind. The Lesoeur girl. She was out of the school "for at least the present semester, due to ill health" and it was possible that her tragedy was his salvation.

He shook his head. Foolish, he told himself; you know better than that. She won't forget. She won't forgive. Maybe she's biding her time; maybe the waiting is part of the punishment. But there will be something; and that will be the end of James McGivern.

I should, he thought wearily, drop a card to some of the boys. They'll surely have to update their obits in a hurry. They'd appreciate that sort of consideration.

He went back to watching the clock.

Dr. Matthewson raged at the school nurse, "D'you think I'm blind? D'you imagine I think medical alcohol evaporates? Speak up! I can forgive your dishonesty, as you're a Gurney and I know the breed from of old. But your stupidity I cannot tolerate! How can you imagine that I remain unaware of your practice of secretly tippling with the school's alcohol?"

The school nurse said colorlessly, "I'm sorry, Dr. Matthewson." It was the monthly requisition-for-supplies tempest. It was always bad. Some months it was worse. The nurse was mildly surprised that it had gone on so long this time. It was nearly ten o'clock. But it would end, because it always had.

Dr. Matthewson fumed and drummed with her fingers on the desk as she studied the requisition. "Scandalous," she muttered. She snatched the stub of a pencil and crossed out two lines with a vicious stroke. "I refuse to believe," she shouted, "that you can have disposed of six jars of aspirin in one month! There simply cannot be that many headaches. Please inform the students that this is not a charitable institution. There is, I believe, a perfectly adequate apothecary's shop in Eleusis."

She signed the requisition and returned it to the nurse. "Have the balance of it ordered," she grumbled. "You will find Mr. McGivern in the anteroom. Have him step in."

She was muttering darkly to herself as the nurse walked out, leaving the door open, a practice Dr. Matthewson detested. But as McGivern entered, she looked up and smiled.

It was a hard, cold smile, but it was a smile, he realized wonderingly. It was, in fact, indistinguishable from her best and friendliest; the old girl had only so much to work with in the way of lips and teeth.

He was very calm. He sat down without waiting to be asked—in case she didn't intend to ask him. If it was going to be a bloody battle, it wouldn't matter.

She said, "Good morning. I am terribly sorry, Mr. McGivern, to keep you waiting, but that idiotic nurse—" Her shrug disposed of idiotic nurses.

"I didn't mind," he said. He took the folder off his lap and laid it on her desk. "Here are the project outlines," he informed her. That was the ostensible reason for his being

here; she had insisted on approving the students' personal proposals for individual projects in his journalism seminar. He was, he realized, the only instructor in Eleusis who was allowed not even the small freedom of making his own assignments.

But McGivern was long past caring about prerogatives. And besides, the outlines were no more than a pretext, bait to bring him into the trap, he was certain.

But Dr. Matthewson was studying them carefully. He watched warily, the big old fish, aware of the hook, waiting for the touch of the gaff.

She read them over without looking up. She didn't speak or stop until she had finished the folder.

"I see," she said. She looked at him thoughtfully for a moment. "Mr. McGivern, I want to ask you something."

Here it comes, he thought, wondering. It was not like her to telegraph her punches. "Yes, Dr. Matthewson?"

"Miss Riker. What do you think of her?"

He was caught off-balance. "Why—uh—very talented girl, Dr. Matthewson. Brilliant, in fact. I suppose you saw her seminar project, the women's magazine? She'll do well with it."

Dr. Matthewson nodded judiciously. "You reinforce my own opinion, Mr. McGivern. May I suggest that you work with her on it as closely as you can? Spend time with her. Get to know her. She will bring honor to the school, Mr. McGivern, and I trust you to help her develop her talents."

McGivern said feebly, "Well, of course, I try to give all of my students—"

"No, no. I want you to concentrate on this one, Mr. McGivern. Are you aware that she has been published? There is an essay, I believe, on *Melville as Kafka*—I'm sure you've read it. Hers, and it has occasioned a great deal of literary excitement in the intellectual world, Mr. McGivern. Her novel—Fisher and Fisher has already elected to publish it. Help her. I ask you not only as a duty to me and to the school, but as a duty to American letters."

"I'll do my best."

"Spend a *lot* of time with her, Mr. McGivern. And thank you for coming here."

The journalism seminar was a late class, but McGivern was still shaken by the time it came. He had gone over his talk with Dr. Matthewson until the phrases blurred together and his old brain no longer was sure who had said which; but if there was poison somewhere in the meat, his senses were too dulled to detect it.

It was almost as if, he marveled to himself, she had been making helpful supervisory comments about the running of his class.

He made up his mind to one thing: He was going to have a good long talk with Kathryn Jackson, the first chance he got. Maybe there was something he had missed.

He was sitting at his desk as the students started to trickle in. They used one of the school's common rooms for the seminar, "to avoid an institutional atmosphere," said the school's brochure. To avoid using another classroom, thought Mr. McGivern, but he couldn't deny that it was more pleasant than rows of desks. There were armchairs and work tables; and there was a fireplace which added to the feeling of cheerful intimacy.

When they were all settled McGivern settled back and said to the eight girls, "You'll be pleased to hear that the front office has approved all projects as submitted. Miss Sullivan, may we hear from you first?"

Miss Sullivan's assignment was to write an editorial advocating the raising of the rediscount rate by the Federal Reserve Board. And she had been fiendishly instructed to write it for a tabloid.

She read her piece, a competent, mechanical job, properly simplified into bread-and-butter terms for the rednecked readers of tabloids.

"Any comment, Miss Crispin?"

"A very superior job, I thought."

"Tear into it, Miss Crispin. That's what we're here for."

"Well, wasn't it a little tongue-in-cheek? That bit where you kidded the economists for using gobbledygook, I sort of got an impression that you were *condescending*."

"That can be fatal," another girl said wisely.

Miss Sullivan said with dignity, "I don't think it's fair to attack a piece of work on the nebulous grounds of the writer's possible attitude when she was writing it."

McGivern put in, "We're not discussing the theory of literary criticism, Miss Sullivan. It sounded tongue-in-cheek and condescending to Miss Crispin. And to how many others?"

Hands went up.

"Very well," said McGivern. "We're all against you, Miss Sullivan. The question is, what gives your editorial a faint smarty-pants air which, I strongly suspect, would annoy a tab reader?"

A girl volunteered, "Too many jokes and sneers at the eggheads. The readership would know it's being truckled to. You want to liven up the rediscount rate, not kid it."

"You're not sincere, Sully. It shows."

Miss Sullivan said, pointedly not looking at Mr. McGivern, "Perhaps not. I find it very difficult to be sincere, or even faintly interested in the rediscount rate of the Federal Reserve Board. I dutifully did my research, my facts are correct and I couched them appropriately. What more can you ask?"

McGivern waggled his finger at her. "Professionalism," he said. "You were unable, or unwilling, to submerge your own attitude. You girls certainly don't know it, but your instructor happens to be the man who helped put over Daylight Saving Time in New York State. The *Globe-Record's* editor-in-chief decided that we'd campaign for Daylight Saving Time and that I'd run the campaign. I could think then, and I can think now, of a hundred and fifty things that are more important for a newspaper to plug than Daylight Saving Time, but orders were orders and I did the job. The next session of the legislature enacted it into law and I personally heaved a great relieved sigh, because I was going nuts thinking up plausible reasons why it should be enacted. That, I submit to you girls, was professionalism."

"Not prostitution?" Miss Sullivan asked demurely.

McGivern chuckled. "I thought you girls wanted newspaper work. For your information, the rallying song that the boys sing at Jim Blake's place in New York is 'We're all Whores Together.' Very pleasant newsman's hangout, by the way. No, girls, if what you want is integrity and self-expression, you'd better scrape together five hundred dollars for the printing bill and put out your own little magazine."

He smiled at Ann Riker. "If I may say so without offense to our member who contributes to them."

"No offense, Mr. McGivern," she said cheerfully.

Sometimes the girl was likeable, to his surprise. "Shall we hear from you next, Miss Riker?"

The first step of her project was a survey of existing women's magazines, to lead into a probing for soft spots in the coverage which might be penetrated by a new publication.

Fluently and with charm Ann delivered her report from sketchy notes. She etched an acid portrait of the omnibus old-line books with their "something for everybody" policy: cooking, decoration, fiction, public service, consumer ratings, health, babies, psychology, clothes. She outlined the "young-married" group appealing to a specific and enormously abundant class. She covered the working-girl and the teenage books, dismissing their naivetes almost with contempt.

For the high-fashion magazines she slowed down and lingered approvingly, but with reservations.

Her conclusion was that there *was* a soft spot in women's magazine coverage, possibly not a big one, but the high-fashion magazines were not large circulation. Their enormously profitable operation was due to the fact that they sold to people who had a great deal of money to spend on the luxuries. Ann Riker felt that there was an opening for a magazine which had the elegance of the high-fashion books, aimed at an upper-middle group instead of an upper group, and which also would feature the best contemporary prose, verse and art.

"Very provocative, Miss Riker," McGivern rumbled paternally. "Your development was so swift that perhaps I missed a vital link. Why the emphasis in Magazine X—let's call it that—on *avant-garde* writing and art?"

"I think, Mr. McGivern, that there are very many women who recoil from the banalities of popular fiction and illustration. Some of them would be merely flattered and uncomprehending, but many, the majority, I think, would be an appreciative audience for experimental work if it were presented to them palatably."

"Miss Cowan, would you care to discuss Miss Riker's survey?"

Miss Cowan would. "I think you're too hard on the old magazines, Ann," she said. "I'm not one of those goons who writes in from a hospital bed and says 'God bless the *Ladies' Home Journal*, I've got cancer of the stomach but the dear old magazine pulled me through.' I'm just a reader and I like it. Some of it's banal, sure, but it's a smorgasbord. You read what you like and leave the rest. And I'm sorry, but I don't think there's a mass audience for *avant-garde* anything in this country, no matter if you make it look like *Vogue* or *Harper's Bazaar*. Look at the record, Riker. Even when the little magazines set their sights for a miserable five thousand circulation they can't make it. They're always broke after a year or two. Those that keep going do it by subsidies, and that's not *publishing*. That's just spending money on a hobby—not even your own money, maybe."

The other girls more or less agreed. One of them tittered. Ann began to breathe more rapidly.

Careless of Sully to laugh, she thought coldly. It gave the whole show away. How painstakingly they must have planned this! And she had walked right into it, unaware. But now she knew, and that would be her salvation. She must not allow them to guess that she knew of their plot.

She clamped a mask on her face, eager, politely-attentive, and looked for further signs of the conspiracy. They were spending too much time on her project, too, she thought. How quickly they had passed over the others—but they had been phonies, of course. One more proof.

She remembered the analyst's warning, "You must not think people are conspiring against you. There are no conspiracies. Remember that."

She shook her head, wryly amused at herself. And all this time she had been fooled. How he must have laughed to himself—and to the other conspirators—as he reported his success!

But she couldn't stand much more of this. She held down the internal fires and produced a smile. She said, mock-heroically, shoulders squared, "Very well then. I'll go it alone! Shall we pass on to the others?"

McGivern blinked. Now that, he thought, was another surprise in a surprising day. Since when did Ann Riker turn

away from the spotlight? It might have been because the comment, by and large, had been adverse, but he would have bet a day's ration of his inexpensive blended whiskey that she was a hog for any kind of attention, favorable or otherwise.

Maybe, he thought slowly, turning to the girl who had a clever idea for a Broadway column, maybe Dr. Matthewson saw more clearly than he. Possibly Riker was a talented, normal girl who would indeed bring honor to the school.

He began to speak of Odd McIntyre. While his attention was diverted, and before she could forget, Ann jotted in her notebook the date and: *McG said to class "We're all whores together."* Dr. Matthewson would be interested in that. Careful, careful! Something inside her warned. You've been fooled before. Perhaps Matthewson is one of Them.

She was up and halfway to the door as soon as McGivern announced the end of the session; but he stopped her. "Miss Riker," he said, remembering his orders from Matthewson, "if you can spare me a minute I'd like to run through your project again."

"Of course." Let him talk. He doesn't know you know. They're frighteningly clever and strong, but They don't know you know.

He said, "I like the way you handled yourself when the seminar was discussing Magazine X. Journalism—in fact, all writing, perhaps you might say all of human endeavor—is a problem with more answers than one. You must know that, or you wouldn't have got as far as you have."

"Thank you."

He said, "The powerful writers and editors are the ones who never take no for an answer. You've got to learn from criticism, and this is as good a place to start as any. But you can't let criticism change your mind about what *you want*—it can only show you, at best, how successful you've been in communicating. Now, let's hammer out your views on the *avant-garde*. You don't want to publish the *New New Review* or you would have selected that for your project. Obviously, there is something in the *New New Review* that you think has some significance for American housewives. What is it?"

It was a reprieve, Ann saw. There was time. In spite of

Sully's slip, which might have precipitated Their attack, there was still time, or else McGivern would not be maundering away like this.

Ann Riker, earnest, eager, young, talented, reached deep into her armory for the one weapon that could save her. Charm. Try to win over this old treacherous fool, try to split Their alliance. Keep Them from suspecting that you are warned; it is your only hope.

McGivern nodded approvingly while she talked, earnestly and sincerely, expounding her dream of a mass publication with class standards. Perhaps she's all right after all, he thought. All he could see was the young face and the sober eyes, and not the charnel corruption inside the brain, where Ann was reveling in a fantasy of horrible murder of himself.

XV

"CLOSED UNDER addition," Clara said thoughtfully, staring into space. "You mean like—"

"Any set of numbers in which any two numbers, added together, produce a third number which is also in the set. Take the set of all natural numbers—one, two, three and so on. One plus two is three—three is in the same set. Or take the set of even numbers. Two plus four is six—which also belongs to the set of even numbers."

"Hm." Clara began nodding. "But not odd numbers, for instance, because one and three make an even number."

"That's right." Dr. Crouch ran through the sets of numbers closed under addition with her.

It took them about half an hour and then Crouch blinked and looked at his watch. He was honestly amazed.

"Clara," he said, "you're ready for ring theory. I usually take three weeks just to work through the definition. Slow down or I won't be able to keep up with you."

She said seriously, "But there's still the whole question

of congruences and—oh.” She grinned. “You’re joking. I suppose all this is pretty elementary to you.”

Dr. Crouch closed the notebooks and said slowly, “Smoke if you want to, Clara.” He watched her thoughtfully as she took a cigarette out of her bag, still abstracted, and lit it.

“Elementary?” he said. “Sure it is. So far we’re still working out of the texts, and the really important stuff—the marches, you might say, where you begin to jostle against the challenge of the problems that haven’t been solved and maybe haven’t even been presented yet—the important stuff isn’t even in the texts. But I don’t think you have any idea how fast you’re gobbling up the texts.” He handed her an ashtray. He demanded, “Clara, what comes next?”

She was startled. “Comes next how?”

He said carefully, “I don’t want to overestimate it. But I think you can make a contribution to mathematics. Sure, you’re a long way from it. You’ve got three years in this sewer—four or five more years somewhere else, for your master’s, your doctor’s, your chance to really go to work. And then, perhaps, you’ll find out somewhere along the line that it isn’t your pigeon after all. Math history is full of prodigies who burned out. They start out like Newtons and Wieners, and by the time they’re thirty-five they’re book-keepers somewhere, or—” he hesitated, and then went on, “or teachers in Eleusis Academy.”

She said, “What do you want me to do?”

“I want you to make up your mind to go ahead. See just how far you can push your brain. Or else I want to terminate this class.”

He was watching her closely, waiting for her to say something. Damn this man, Clara thought rebelliously. He’s putting me in an impossible position! How can I go back and tell Gwynn Coal & Iron that *their* daughter wants to really work at math? They’d flip.

She temporized weakly. “But, Dr. Crouch, can’t we at least go on for the semester? Perhaps by then it will, uh, clear itself up.”

He shouted, “No! I mean, excuse me. I can’t do it, Clara. Do you know what I did last week? I sent for a trunk that’s been in a warehouse in New York for better than ten years. Do you know what’s in it? Books. Papers. Manuscripts of

books that *I* was going to write. Stuff that I thought I was all through with, and didn't have the courage to burn. Stuff that I've been paying storage charges on for ten years, because I was kidding myself. Sooner or later I would die; and the trunk would be opened; and maybe, maybe, somebody would come across the papers inside and think they were worth sending to Ore at Yale or Wright, or Bell out in California. And then some graduate student might come across my factorization theorem—it would be a juicy bit for a doctoral thesis—and finish it up where I had failed, and my name might stay alive. I was kidding myself. But I paid the charges, and now I've sent for it. I thought perhaps my sleepwalking days were over."

She asked simply, "What was it that happened—ten years ago?"

"My wife and my two children were killed in a head-on crash," he said.

"I'm—I'm sorry."

It was the first time in years he had said the words. It was the first time in years he had allowed the thought to solidify out of the mist of grief that had shrouded him since the day.

"Something gave," he said, talking to himself. "Margot was a good girl, a good wife. The young mathematicians coming up now don't know what it was like. They're hot merchandise now; any kid Ph.D. can hire himself out to a California aircraft plant for stress analysis, or to a communications lab for solid-state theoretical physics. They start at eight thousand, I've been told. I've seen the ads; they lure them like harlots hanging from a window. Beautiful year-round climate, hunting and fishing nearby, liberal pension plan.

"Pension plan. Do you know what we used to call ourselves back in the depression days? Math bums. We got our B.A.'s, and that wasn't the snap it is today, and we wangled eight-dollar-a-week instructorships so we could go on for our masters and doctorates. By then we'd be pulling down a big twelve a week on the side, as well as a full academic program. We hitch-hiked to the math conferences and we sat at the feet of the big professors, the great researchers,

and they were much envied because they had maybe as much as five thousand a year and tenure.

"You got on a faculty in those days, thirty-two a week and unpaid vacations, and you had gigantic classes of engineering freshmen to lead through calculus, and you marked their papers and counseled them when they couldn't get the ideas through their head because of the lousing-up they were subjected to in high school. After four hours of that, maybe you were allowed to teach one class in real math, and maybe there was in that class one real mathematician. And after your day's work was done, you did your own research, mostly because you loved it but partly because you had to be published in the journals or get kicked off the faculty. And when you were too tired to work any more you took a walk in the night and you always wound up at the room of some other math bum and you had wonderful arguments about formalism versus intuitionism. I was a formalist in those days; I would have died happy for a smile from David Hilbert, who was five thousand miles away and didn't know I was alive.

"Believe it or not, we had our girls. There were young women in the world who were patient and kind enough to put up with us in spite of our shabbiness and general lunacy. Margot was one of them. She was in the college library, the science section. She had a title a yard long and twenty-two dollars for a sixty-hour week. There were night classes, and they had a right to books too. Somehow Margot could stand me and my friends; she could sit nearby and sew a button on my coat while I was mopping up the floor with Joe Rubin—yes, *the* Joe Rubin, the big wheel connected with the Atomic Energy Commission, the guy in the headlines. In those days he was just a math bum like me, in a furnished room like me.

"And Margo and I drifted into sleeping together now and then, but in those days you didn't think about marriage too seriously. Not on thirty-two a week, because she would have been fired if she'd got married, not out of viciousness but on the very reasonable grounds that jobs were scarce and a married woman could be supported by her husband; a single girl needed the job.

"And then a couple of my old professors pulled some strings for me and I got the appointment in Illinois. Fifty-

five a week all year round to start, automatic raises, almost-automatic promotions if I had the stuff. It was the greatest day of our lives. We got married right away, of course. Bought a car out of our savings—forty dollars it cost us, and it wasn't bad; we used it for three years after we got out to Illinois.

"The appointment was everything I'd hoped it would be. So was marriage. So were children. Things were getting pretty good over a six-year period; I was up to eighty-five, the kids were healthy and happy, we were reducing the mortgage at a great rate—"

He buried his face convulsively in his hands.

"Nobody's fault," he said at last, looking up, breathing hard. "A farmer in a junk car, his brakes failed on a curve. He was thrown clear." His voice sank to a whisper as he said, "It burned."

There was a long pause before he went on. "I had to get away, of course. I couldn't think about anything else, couldn't talk about anything else for a while. And then I got—tired. I've been tired for ten years. But now—I don't know. I feel as if I'm waking up. Are you doing it, Clara? I don't know whether to bless you or curse you if you are."

"I don't know," she whispered, staring at him. "Why should it be me?"

I don't want it to be me, she said to herself. This is no place for me, this isn't what I was brought up for, this is clean off the rails. They'd all laugh; Mother would be furious.

"I've sent for my trunk," he said. "I'm even going to open it; I've just made up my mind about that. Ten years' perspective should help me to see what I've got to discard and what I've got to work on.

"I think I'm going to pull some strings," he said. "Joe Rubin, for one. I think I'm going to work out the semester here and maybe another and publish while I'm here. And then they'll see my papers in the *Journal* and I suppose they'll say, 'Crouch? I thought he was dead,' and I suppose a few wiseguys will be around to say, 'I heard he lost his mind but it seems he's coming around again.'

"That's all I ask, Clara! Just 'it seems.' From there I'll

ram it down their throats that I'm coming round again, bigger and better than ever!"

"You can do it," she said, knowing she spoke the truth as surely as an ancient prophetic sibyl.

"Bless you," he said. And then, "Could you—come along? It won't be much. It won't be for very long. What have I got—twenty years, thirty? Just enough to use up your youth. But I can teach you along the way. We can work together for twenty or thirty years. They could be good years."

He doesn't understand, she thought despairingly. He doesn't know about the Grandfathers, tennis, table talk, the rails I've got to roll along. He doesn't realize that Mother would be furious.

What has he got to offer? Himself, pleasant enough, but old, and everybody knows that youth is better than age, that you paint your face and squeeze into girdles and cultivate a girlish laugh and watch your drinking so you'll stay young. He's kind and he thinks he needs me, but somewhere there's a young man with broad shoulders in a Brooks Brothers suit who went to a right college and got a Gentleman's C in Business Administration or Engineering. He's rolling along his rails right now, and I'm rolling along my rails toward him and unless we meet Mother will be furious.

What has he got to offer? Love and understanding, I suppose, and the wisdom I'm seeking in numbers that lie behind the universe, that make me drunk and happy with their intricate beauty. We could share that, but Mother would be—

"I'm sorry," she said uneasily. "Truly I'm sorry, but—" Her voice trailed off.

"Very well," he said tiredly. "You mustn't worry. It won't happen again. We will be—mathematicians together." He managed a smile.

"Thank you," she said sincerely.

He looked at his watch and said, "This class appears to be over. I'll see you next week, Miss Gwynn."

"Next week," she said politely, and left.

XVI

HENSCHEL came into the bar, gave the place his automatic looking over, did a double-take and stopped in his tracks.

There was Crouch on a barstool.

Henschel went over and sat beside him, after a moment. He realized, almost with awe, that the math teacher was drunk.

Crouch looked at him unseeingly for a moment. Then, "Oh, Henschel." He shook the other man's hand. "Owe you a drink anyhow. Have one."

"Beer, Abe." Henschel waited until it came. Crouch didn't seem talky-drunk, he had gone back to looking at himself in the mirror. Henschel swallowed half the beer, wiped his lips, cleared his throat and said, "I'm surprised to see you here, Crouch."

"Surprised?" Crouch thought for a moment, then shrugged. "Why surprised? Beer's math bug's natural drink. Always used to drink it."

"Uh, Crouch—" Henschel assumed a confiding air. "Will you do something for me? I'm expecting to meet a young lady here. You know what would happen if Dr. Matthewson found out about it, I imagine."

"Zzzzt." Crouch unsteadily drew a finger across his throat.

"Exactly. So please—don't say anything."

Crouch patted him on the shoulder. "No fear. I won't give you'n what's-her-name away. Joy, that it?" He nodded. "You can always trust a math bug—except Fermat," he added darkly.

"Thanks. Now how about another beer? It's my turn to buy."

Crouch nodded absently. "Watch out for that one," he warned.

"What? Who?"

"Fermat!" Crouch roared. "Can't trust him! Always dis-

covering something'r other that he can't write down because there isn't 'nough room on the paper! 'Member the formula for primes? Worked in four cases, that's all. Four lousy cases! He said it would work for *every* case. 'Member the Pyth—Pythagorean triangle formula? Said he could prove there was no rational solution for any 'sponent over two. But did he prove it?" Crouch demanded.

"Well—"

"Bet your damn boots he didn't!" Crouch subsided, mumbling. He sighed. "Great mind, all the same. Too damn lazy to write things down, thassall." He got up and staggered out of the bar. Henschel, staring after him, was nearly sure he was weeping.

Joy was nearly half an hour late. "God, I'm dry!" she said. "Where's my beer?"

Henschel signaled to Abe and then turned back to Joy. "You'll never guess who was drinking in here when I came in."

"Dr. Matthewson."

"Well—no. Not that astonishing. Crouch."

"Good heavens, no!"

Henschel nodded, gratified. "He was loaded to the gunnels. Babbling about mathematics."

"How perfectly incredible," breathed Joy. "Why, whatever do you suppose set him off?"

"Well," began Henschel, and then he stopped. He looked at Joy closely. "Oh-ho," he said. "Were you by any chance late because you were chatting with your roommate, the one who slapped him?"

Joy said virtuously, "If I had any confidences from Clara, I *certainly* wouldn't repeat them."

Henschel said, "Well, I hadn't thought of it in that light, but—yes, that would save the facts, as the mathematicians say. Girl slaps prof. Prof gets ideas. Girl steps on ideas. Prof gets loaded. It wouldn't," he went on meditatively, "be the first time a faculty member got loaded up in here because of one of his students."

Joy said eagerly, "Jim, did you? Over me?"

"No, it was over Dr. Matthewson, as it happened. She

turned me down flat. And when are you going to do the same?"

"Perhaps, I won't, Jim," she said softly. "Where's my beer?"

The evening went well. Henschel congratulated himself on avoiding a discussion that he had been rather nervously anticipating. There had been a quiz in his English class that afternoon. Joy had not done well. He had been nearly sure she would bring it up, but she chattered on as though English and school were far from her thoughts. He began to feel guilty for having misjudged her—until they were on their way back to the campus in his car.

There was a corner at which, by custom, he stopped to let her get out. It was a short walk to the back gate of the campus from there. It was behind the main wall of the campus, conveniently without lights, conveniently surrounded by trees. He stopped the car, turned off the ignition, and reached for her in the darkness.

She kissed him lingeringly. Then her hand closed unerringly on his seeking fingers. "Please, dear," she begged.

That was the bell to mark the end of Round One. "Want a cigarette before you go in?" he asked. She did, of course; he lit one for each of them.

She said softly, "I butchered it, didn't I?"

"Butched what?"

"The quiz."

So there it was. He had a series of splendid answers to give her. He hadn't had time to mark the papers; he'd marked them and already turned the grades in to Dr. Matthewson; he'd turned over the marking to someone else on the faculty; he'd mislaid the papers in the dining room—

But he hadn't decided on which answer to give. And his hesitation was her answer.

She sighed, "I'm sorry, Jim. Let's not talk about it. Kiss me good night, and then I'll go on in."

This time her hands were flat on his back, pressing, and her lips opened to him. She finally broke away, half laughing. "Ouch! My cigarette!" And that was the bell that ended Round Two.

He kissed her fingers—they didn't seem scorched to him. He cleared his throat.

"Joy," he said. It was time they had this out. "You did butch the quiz. It wasn't hard. Fourteen other girls passed it."

She sat up straight. "You mean, I didn't even *pass*?"

"Pass? Joy, that was the worst—"

"Oh, Jim! I thought—I mean, I knew I didn't do anything special on it. But I didn't think it was a failing paper, truly I didn't." She seemed on the verge of tears. "I'm not a genius, but I n-n-never *failed* a quiz before! You know that!" She clung to him, infinitely young, infinitely sad.

Automatically he stroked her head.

He took a deep breath, staring straight ahead of him. "Well," he said, "it wasn't that bad, maybe. There were a few—my God, Joy, what made you think Michael Drayton wrote *Piers Plowman*?" he demanded, suddenly angry.

She sobbed.

He said glumly, "All right, cut it out. You didn't do too badly on the essay question."

She sat up, close and warm in the dark. "You mean I did pass? You were just scaring me?"

"Scaring you? No. I—" He hesitated for a moment, and that was a moment too long. After all, who would know? So one young blonde idiot more or less gets a passing grade on a paper that no one will ever see.

He said lamely, "I—I thought you understood. You didn't fail. It's just that I expected more from you, Joy. Matter of fact, you got a higher mark than Tyne—and Needham too, for that matter. Come here."

She nestled in his arms obediently. Listlessly.

"Darling," he said a little later, "you're not kissing back. What's wrong?"

"Nothing," she said.

"Yes there is."

"No," she insisted brightly. "It's perfectly all right."

Uncertainly he kissed the smooth lips, the smooth unresponsive lips. "Dear?" he said.

After a pause she said in a small, cool voice, "Mummy's counting on me in English. She doesn't care about math and science and history, but she tutored me herself in English. She'll be terribly hurt; she'll take it personally."

"Joy," he said, "Michael Drayton was a great poet, but

he did not write *Piers Plowman*. Thomas Kyd wrote *The Spanish Tragedie*, not Christopher Marlowe. 'The roaring Devil in the old play' referred to the miracle plays Shakespeare must have seen in his youth and not, as you said, to a theological debate. *Beowulf* could not possibly, as you said, have been a source for Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*; it had been forgotten for a thousand years. What I was fishing for was *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* or Tasso's *Orlando Furioso*. Chaucer did not introduce the sonnet to England, it was a couple of other guys centuries later. In *Beowulf* it was Grendel's mother who—" He realized that his voice was rising in pitch and loudness; he choked it off.

"Joy," he asked after a deep breath, "haven't you cracked a book yet this semester?"

She burst out, "I don't see how any person of any sensitivity could expect me to sit down and memorize after what I've been through with Avis. Don't you realize that the poor girl nearly died in my arms? I've been upset; don't think I haven't."

"I'm—I'm sorry," he said awkwardly. "I didn't realize you two were so close. Under the circumstances—forgive me, Joy. I've been thoughtless. I didn't realize how much so."

She was crying a little and moved submissively to him as he took her by the shoulders and moved her close. He kissed her eyes and whispered, "Better?"

"Better," she sighed. "You're sweet, Jim. I'm sorry I'm so upset. Avis, and Mother counting on me so, and the way the test came out—"

She made it sound as though the test were a malign engine of chance, a sort of super-slotmachine where a girl put in her reputation, blindly yanked the lever and tremblingly awaited the result, the three bars of a perfect grade or the three lemons of a flunk.

Madly he accepted the theory. "I'll fix it," he whispered. "It doesn't matter, darling. I'll change a couple of the questions. Just don't be upset."

"You're good to me, Jim," she sighed, and her fingers went electrically through his hair while they kissed again.

"I want to be good to you, Joy," he said. "All our lives long. Joy, you remember? I've asked you—"

She stopped his mouth with a kiss.

And pulled away. "May I have another cigarette, Jim?" she asked breathlessly. "You carry a girl away, but I don't want to be carried too far—tonight."

He started with pleased surprise. It was a promise! Or as close to one as she had ever come. He passed her a cigarette, kissing her hand as she reached for it.

"You and your pretty ways," she said. Her face, lit by the flaring match he held for her, was grave and lovely.

The red dot of her cigarette moved gracefully in the dark. She said, "Jim, I've been a damned fool."

"You mean—about us?"

"No. Let's skip it. It's something at the sorority."

The cigarette soared in an arc from the car after a couple of puffs. She moved close to him and said, "Think we ought to be going?"

"No," he said.

"Neither do I." He reached for her.

"You like me, don't you?" she smiled. "Well, I'm all yours. Up to a point." Her hands were cupped behind his neck, almost maternally. He could feel her heart, beating as wildly as his own.

"I said I've been a damned fool," she whispered. "The girls at the Lambs will laugh at me for weeks."

"Let them dare," he said. "I'll flunk them all. What did you do?"

He felt her shrug; it was a most unusual sensation. "I bragged," she said, continuing to caress his neck. "I actually thought I'd get 100 on your test. I made a lot of noise saying so. I was in a state after Avis and one of them kidded me about studying so I shot my mouth off. I really thought I had the stuff licked."

She began to sob, which was an unusual sensation too, though not as agreeable as the shrug. "Don't let them laugh at me, Jim," she pleaded. "After what I've been through it'll be just too much." The sobs stopped and she withdrew one hand from his neck to wipe her eyes. "Sorry," she said. "I didn't mean to cry on your shoulder. Literally, isn't it? Let me button up so we can go home, Jim."

"Not yet," he pleaded.

So they stayed, and with his hand on her knee Jim Hen-

schel heard himself saying the hell with her sisters at the Lambs; she, poor kid, had enough on her mind. With his hand on her thigh he heard himself saying he'd score her 100.

That was as far as his hand went, because she accidentally leaned on the horn ring and the raucous blast split the night, scaring the wits out of him and sending her into a prolonged fit of nervous giggling. It took the edge off the evening; she buttoned up and he started the car.

"*You* won't forget, Jim," she said, and it was not a question but a warm statement of fact, that he was not the kind of guy who forgot promises made to a girl in her hour of need.

"I won't," he said. "And you haven't forgotten, I hope, that there's an honorable proposal of marriage pending."

"No, darling," she said softly. "But I'm so confused. Perhaps I'll have an answer for you the night of the Gambol. I hope so."

"So do I," he said, a little grimly. And then loathed himself for the thought that crossed his mind, that Joy was a tease. She was a sweet, sincere kid with things on her mind.

A sardonic voice deep inside him added, "If you can call it a mind."

Virtuously, he paid no heed to it.

XVII

THE DECORATIONS COMMITTEE had found branches of evergreens and wreaths of holly and proposed a Christmasy-Year's Endy motif for the Lambs Gambol. The House Committee had thrown up its hands in horror at the inappropriateness of the motif, and suggested a springy, shepherdessy scheme, in keeping with the name of the sorority. At that the Decorations Committee had thrown up, period, and the matter had been resolved by voice vote of the entire chapter membership—which decided to turn the whole thing

over to a catering-decorating firm from Scranton. Just like last year and all the years before.

All the same, somehow or other the show had gotten on the road, and the Lambs Gambol had arrived.

The Chairman of the Decorating Committee said stiffly to the Chairman of the House Committee, "Mardi Gras! I mean, *really!* Honestly, Else, I just couldn't go along with all those pink bows and lamb's-wool puffs of yours— but *Mardi Gras!*"

The Chairman of the House Committee said grimly, "Karen, you are so right. And have you seen the bill for all this yet? At least that Christmas-tree thing of yours would have been *cheap.*"

They parted at the door of the Lambs Common Room, where the men from Scranton were tying the last of the balloons into place, with identical expressions of distaste. Ann Riker was coming down the stairs, not yet dressed for the party. They cut her dead; for it had been Ann, remorselessly polite, frighteningly sure, who had swung the chapter meeting against them both.

Ann grinned at their backs and hurried across the campus to Dr. Matthewson's office. She loved a party. She was feeling good. She was able to look back on the worried, fearful, trapped Ann of a couple of weeks ago with wry amusement. You see? she demanded sunnily of the absent psychiatrist who had warned her. Nothing happened. I didn't have a *bad time*. I'll probably never have a *bad time* again. I've outgrown them, that's all.

She knocked on Dr. Matthewson's door and went in without waiting for an answer. It was amusing, she chuckled to herself, that Dr. Matthewson pretended not to hear, for it made it possible for one to pretend, in turn, that one had knocked a good long time before entering. And you never could tell; some day there was the chance of blundering in and catching Dr. Matthewson in some preposterously embarrassing situation—with her teeth in a glass, say, or gobbling the food she stole from the kitchens.

Not this time, though. Dr. Matthewson was seated at her desk, crouched over some papers, and she glared at Ann with outrage in her eyes. "Miss Riker," she began, but Ann cut in.

"Dr. Matthewson," she said gravely, "we hit the jackpot today. Do you know what Mr. McGivern did?"

Dr. Matthewson hesitated, was diverted from a tantrum, and succumbed. "Tell me!" she ordered.

Ann said, "He advised Elaine Boyerhouse to read an obscene book! Her project is a literary supplement, and she had done a long, complicated piece for it on censorship, and he told her she didn't know her facts—"

"What was the name of the book?"

"*Ulysses*. By James Joyce."

"Umph." Dr. Matthewson poked her lower lip out and made chewing movements with her jaw. She glared at Ann. "Miss Riker," she said harshly, "you can do better than that. What about the Jackson girl?"

Ann hesitated, a little off balance. Damn the woman, she thought; I thought sure she'd go for *Ulysses*. She didn't mind feeding old McGivern to the wolves. He was ripe for it, in terms of years, and perfectly expendable in Ann's eyes. But Kathryn—she had plans for Kathryn.

She said, "There's nothing to tell you about her, Dr. Matthewson. Nothing at all."

"Miss Riker, I've been patient long enough! I want results from you, I want something that *means* something. I don't just want to fire McGivern, I want him blacklisted for the rest of his life! Can't you get him to try to fondle you? Can't you get him to offer you a drink? Are your pretty morals too strong? I still have that letter from California. *Do you want me to act on it?*"

Something was thumping and beating inside of Ann. She tried to smile, to straighten out her clawed fingers, to apologize, to stop this. But Matthewson was unstoppable. "Do you know what they called you?" she screamed. She went on to tell Ann what the letter had called her. "*Get McGivern!*" she ordered. She stopped and glowered uncertainly. "Miss Riker, are you all right?"

Ann straightened up slowly. "Ann's all right," she said, and managed to smile.

"My dear child, I do hope I haven't upset you?" Dr. Matthewson sat back, a little worriedly; for a moment it had almost seemed as though the girl was— No.

Dr. Matthewson stood up. "Dear me," she said, "I must go

and dress for Dr. Anson." She gave Ann a nervous smile and said generously, "Sit here for a moment, if you want to. You do seem a little disturbed. But don't let me down, please. So much depends on it. For both of us. Promise?"

"Ann promises," said Ann Riker.

Kathryn Jackson came worriedly into the room shared by Joy and Clara. Joy said, "You look perfectly lovely, Kathryn! New dress?"

"One of Ann's. Look, Joy, I'm scared."

Joy said warmly, "Honey, you have nothing to be scared about. You'll knock 'em dead. That dress—"

"Wait a minute, Joy," Clara ordered. She was looking at Kathryn. "What's the matter?"

Kathryn confessed, "I don't know. It's Ann. She was out somewhere, and I started to get dressed for the party. And I was putting my face on at the mirror, and I heard a perfectly awful voice shouting at me from the door. I could hardly understand it. I turned around—and it was Ann."

Clara demanded, "What did she say?"

"Well—" Kathryn hesitated. "As near as I can remember, it was, 'Take Ann's dress off your goddamned nigger back!' But so thick and loud—I didn't know who it was until I looked around."

Joy said tactfully, "Look, Kathryn, I have a dress you can—"

Kathryn shook her head. "I don't think it's that. Good lord, Ann *insisted* I wear this dress. I just don't know."

Clara asked, "Did she say anything else?"

Kathryn shook her head again. "She ran into the bathroom and locked the door. She wouldn't answer me when I called."

"Roommates," Joy began, "have run-ins every day of the week, Kathryn. Even Clara and I, and Heaven knows we've had every chance to get used to each other. Now, you just take that dress off and I'll see if I can find some thread—there's a little problem with the zipper in the one I have, and—"

She trailed off. Nobody was listening to her.

Clara said, "Come on. Let's go see what's up."

They hurried down the hall, bunched at the door, and

hesitated. Kathryn took a deep breath—after all, it was her room—started to knock, changed her mind and opened the door.

Ann was sitting at the makeup table, carefully applying powder base. "Hi, sisters," she greeted them. She smiled, then got up and said remorsefully, "Kathryn, was I a bitch? I don't know what to say. I had a perfectly *killing* headache, and I'd just come from Dr. Matthewson. And, frankly, I don't remember. Is there such a thing as a non-alcoholic blackout? My head—"

"Forget it, Ann," Kathryn said.

"I don't know if I'll go down to the Gambol at all," Ann said. "But my young man—"

"What?" Kathryn was stupefied.

Ann gave her a grin. "Hardly know him. A fellow named Boyleston from Fisher and Fisher, my publishers. What you call a 'bright young man.' They have 'em around to take lady writers to lunch at Cheerio's. Thought I'd ask him up for the Gambol and he's coming. It's stupid asking someone I hardly know, but I hardly do know anybody in the East. Oh, I guess I'll go down. For the honor of the Lambs and so Boyleston won't get sore and work against me at Fisher and Fisher. There's Mr. Cumberland, he's my real editor there, handling the novel, but Boyleston might poison his mind against me if I leave him there flat-footed, make him look foolish."

She had said "poison his mind" lightly, with a smile; Kathryn assumed it was a joke.

Gus Sprayragen, lathe operator at the Lehigh car shops, would rather have lost his three years seniority than shown up at a college dance. But Kathryn had summoned him, and when she called he came. It had been like that with them for years now. He knew she was bright and that he wasn't except about things like centering an axle forging, easing it between the lathe centers with the crane, turning it down to a perfect finish and true double taper every time. Kathryn, on the other hand, had gone through high school like a sicklebar mower through a ripe field of wheat, mowing down the competition, scooping up the honors. She was going to be a teacher, which was something like being a priest.

She was going to move outside the circle of the work-shirted people who came home with paychecks on Friday and had no books in their homes. She would wear neat suits and be paid monthly and in her city apartment—Pittsburgh, perhaps Philadelphia, perhaps even mighty New York—would be books he could never read in a million years.

She had frankly told him so in a dismal farewell.

"Honey," he said, "I've been thinking. I make two-twenty-five an hour. That's ninety a week, base. We've been running enough weekend and overtime at the shops to get my average up to a hundred and ten. I own my own car, I live with the folks, I have money in the bank. Enough for a down-payment on one of those new places out on Quarter Mile Road, and to furnish it too. One of these days I might make foreman. Mind you, I don't say I will, but if I do that's one-twenty-five a week base. I just want to say that if you ever change your mind—I'll be there."

And then the letters had come and because she called, he came. In his own car, owned free and clear which not many men could say, and tuned personally to his liking. In an eighty-five-dollar charcoal grey suit which he had gone to Scranton for, and which the tailor had assured him was correct for anything short of an ambassadorial reception. In forty-dollar shoes that fit like silk. In apprehension and uncertainty.

The gate in the Academy wall was lit with a trouble light Henry the handyman had strung from the nearest building, and a neat sign welcomed guests of the Lambs: PLEASE PROCEED TO THE PARKING AREA. The parking area was the graveled place on the Mall, and Henry himself was there to guide your car courteously into line.

Gus gave Henry a ghastly smile and backed his '53 Mercury between an MG and, ohmygod, a Jag. *That* kind of people, he thought. But the Merc was simonized to a better-than-new finish, and his chrome outshone the Jag's, he belligerently decided.

Henry told him, "Right over there, sah. The house that's all lit up."

"Thanks," Gus said hoarsely, and tried to give him a quarter.

"No thank you, sah," said Henry very politely. "That's all right."

Gus gulped and scrunched across the gravel to the brightly-lit portico. Even the car-jockey knows more about this stuff than I do, he thought. He hesitated at the bottom step and then grimly began to climb to his doom.

There were perhaps twenty young men and some older ones circulating about what looked like five acres of gleaming waxed parquet. He noted with great relief that most of them wore charcoal grey suits like his. There were a few tuxes which looked not at all like the tux his father wore to lodge dinners, and there were a couple of men who wore shocking jackets of deep wine red. And where were the girls?

A feathery lady in floating grey took his sweating hand. "I'm Miss George," she said. "Welcome to the Gambol. You're Mr.—?"

"Sprayragen," he said nervously. "Guest of Miss Jackson."

"Of course. The girls come down, you know, at half past eight in a grand procession. Let me see, are you from Pennsylvania State?"

Sure he was from the State of Pennsylvania. "Yes," he said.

"Then you must know Mr. Delaney, here," she said, hooking a passing charcoal grey suit from the throng. "Mr. Delaney, a schoolmate of yours, Mr. Sprayragen." She floated back to the door to greet a new arrival.

"Hello," Delaney said amiably. "I guess I've passed you a few times, but it's a big school. What House?"

It was clear by then. "I misunderstood that lady," he said. "I'm not from Penn State." And before the next question, "I work for the Lehigh."

"Well, do me a favor and do something about their road-bed, will you?" said Delaney. "We call it the Washboard Cannonball. Excuse me; I see somebody I know."

A five-piece orchestra drifted in and methodically began to set up on the dais at the far end of the acres of parquet.

Jim Henschel arrived and mumbled politenesses with Miss George. He was aware that he was unfashionably early for a faculty member. The Lambs' young men were supposed to be there first and the girls were supposed to float down

the stairs for their benefit. After the first dance the faculty could arrive, circulate, perhaps dance half a number. Then Dr. Matthewson would appear in grotesque evening dress for a while and when she left the faculty left and the young people would dance into the small hours, sustained by a catered late supper.

And to hell with the protocol. He was no creaky McGivern to gallantly, archaically foxtrot once around the floor. His girl would be here tonight, fairest of the fair, and had promised—almost—that she'd give him his answer.

He looked at his watch.

A young man in a dinner jacket and ribbon-narrow plaid tie grinned at him and said, "Twelve minutes to go." He put out his hand and said, "Joe Fry. Cornell."

"Jim Henschel. Eleusis Academy for Women," Jim said. "English teacher."

"Darned if you looked it!" the boy said cheerfully. "Well, at least you didn't have to travel a hundred miles in two hours to get here."

"Considering the state of the roads between here and Ithaca, you must have wanted to see somebody very badly."

"Well, we're pretty close," Joe Fry said. "The same town, the same high-school crowd. She wanted to go to Cornell like me, but her mother, you know. Still, we keep in touch and catch up during vakes. We're what you might call long-distance steadies. Practically engaged."

"Maybe I know her," Jim suggested.

"Probably you do, as small as this place is. Joy Squires. Do you place her?"

"Yes," Jim said.

First there was only pain; the rage came later.

The band leader tapped his bow; his men raised their instruments and they hit the first chords of *The Eleusis March*, words by Daphne Winter, '93, music by Elvira Peabody, '95.

The girls in their loveliness floated down the sweeping curve of the open stairs.

Joy hissed to Ann Riker, just ahead of her: "Matches! Have you got the damn matches?"

"Sure. Don't worry." Ann's smile was serene. Looking at the sisters in their lovely gowns, a mother standing below might have thought, fretfully, worriedly, *My girl looks*

scared or My girl needs more sleep. And then, looking at Ann, Now, why can't my girl look like that?

The Regent of the Chapter—leading the procession as was her right—stopped on the bottom step, said formally, "The Lambs welcome you," and nodded a signal.

The House lights went off, all but the dim lights of the musicians.

There was a ragged scratching of matches, and the candles of the girls came to life. The musicians hit the second chorus of *The Eleusis March*, and the girls began to sing Daphne Winter's old, hallowed words.

In the flicker of the Candlelight Sing, all the young faces were pure and beautiful.

Jim Henschel was aware of somebody standing next to him, somebody touching his arm. "That's my girl," the somebody said proudly. "With the kind of green dress, behind the redhead. See her? Kathryn Jackson."

"She's very pretty," said Henschel.

The remark was accepted as just and proper. "Gus Sprayragen's my name," the somebody said. "This is the first time I've been to one of these things."

The girls bore down on the long retard at the end of *The Eleusis March*.

Gus said conscientiously, "They're all pretty, aren't they? Which one is yours?"

The house lights went up and Gus Sprayragen looked around, puzzled. Now, where the devil had the man gone to?

He shrugged and surged forward with the tide, to his Kathryn.

XVIII

CLARA HAD thought of importing a young man from the junior executive echelons of Gwynn Coal & Iron, but decided against it. There had been too much of that already. Anyway, it would be a confession of sorts to her parents that she

wasn't getting along as swimmingly at Eleusis as her letter had pretended. So she elected to take her chances with the stag line.

The first dance was the traditional waltz, and a junior who had somehow been lured all the way from Rensselaer Polytech stepped up and took her around the floor. When she found out his school there was a quick spark of interest, but it turned out his interest in math stopped with the calculation of bridge loads, and besides her talk seemed to embarrass him.

The second dance was a mambo, which presented technical problems. Most of the faculty males and some of the guests disclaimed the necessary ability, thus depleting the pool of stags. Clara smiled brightly and took the occasion to visit the powder room, which was packed.

As she was leaving, Joy came in, looking panicked. "Oh, Clara," she breathed. "Jim's *insane!* Somehow or other he met Joe Fry, and—"

Clara said simply, "What did you expect?" She left Joy in the room. She didn't want to talk to Joy about her problems just then; the girl had sought them out, let her handle them. She smiled at a big-footed boy standing near the hall. He swallowed and spoke to her, and they danced away.

Someone cut in. Well, thought Clara, amazed, so I'm to be the belle of the ball. She turned to the other man's arms. "Hello, Clara," said Dr. Crouch.

Kathryn said, "Would you like some punch?"

Gus said, "What's in it?"

She thought rebelliously: You and your bright ideas, Mr. McGivern! If it hadn't been for the old fool she never would have invited Gus to this thing. It certainly was no kindness to Gus—for all his brand-new charcoal grey suit and bear-greased hair, he was just simply out of place here. You couldn't pick up a machinist and drop him down in the middle of the Lambs Gambol and expect him to *enjoy* it. "What's in the punch" indeed!

She said grumpily, "Let's find out." She turned and led the way to the sideboard.

Astonishingly, his arm stopped her. He said gently, "Don't be nervous, honey. You're as good as they are."

For a mad moment she thought she was going to cry. Then she grinned at him and said shakily, "Sorry, Gus. Let's have some punch."

They joined the crowd around the big crystal bowl, where Mrs. Peddy, wearing a starched, frilly apron, was ladling out crystal cups. What was in the punch was nothing to write home about. More accurately, it was what you could write home about any time, and not occasion the slightest worry to the most easily disturbed mother. It was called "claret cup" and Gus drank it gamely.

He said tenderly, "You're the most beautiful girl in the room." He glanced around. "And this is quite a room. I—I never expected to find you in a set-up like this, Kat. Does all this come with the scholarship?"

She said uncomfortably, "Well—not exactly. One of the other girls—that is, I have a friend—" Now, how did you explain it so it made sense to Gus Sprayragen? "It's all due to a fairy godmother," she said brightly. "Her name's Ann Riker. You'll like her, Gus. I don't see her just now, but I do want you to meet her. She, uh—"

Fortunately there was an interruption. Its name was James McGivern.

He tapped her on the shoulder and said, "This must be Gus Sprayragen. Introduce us, Kathryn." He grinned at Gus and said, "Six years I've been here, and every time one of these things came around I played hooky. But I wanted to meet you, Mr. Sprayragen. Kathryn made it sound worth while." He glanced at the pink punch and made an expression of disgust.

Kathryn stared at him incredulously. Mr. McGivern was wearing a tux. True, it was nothing like a new one; it had shiny spots and the cuffs were yellowing, but he seemed like a perfectly respectable old gentleman.

"Done your military service yet?" he asked Gus.

"Marines," Gus said. "I was in the Inchon landing."

"Red or Green?" he asked Gus, and Kathryn wondered nervously if he were drunk after all.

"The Green side," Gus said. "The Homma Godown, that's a big warehouse they had, was our battalion's objective."

"I read about it. Seven waves to take it."

"Yeah! I was in the second. Don't get the wrong ideas from the newspaper stories, Mr. McGivern, we weren't just mowed down and the whole job wasn't done by the seventh wave. The first waves got cut up and pinned down here and there so we couldn't move up, but the seventh wave restored the line and we all up-assed—" He looked at Kathryn and turned brick-red. "Excuse me," he said.

"Surely."

"Go on, Gus," said McGivern. "I've never got a really first-hand picture of a big amphibious operation."

"Well, sir," Gus began, and went on for five minutes while McGivern asked what were obviously pertinent questions. Kathryn listened with startled alertness; this wasn't the Gus she knew! He'd been in the war, of course—to her, Korea was "the war"—and he'd been in the Marines, which was creditable, and he'd been a corporal but she hadn't known being a Marine corporal meant things like—

"So I could see where this character was with the rifle grenades, but I couldn't kill him, the stone wall was in the way. And Ace could kill him, but he didn't know he was there. It was too noisy and too far to yell, so I bounced a bullet off a rock near Ace's hole and that made him look my way. I waved and loaded a tracer into my rifle and I fired the tracer at that stone wall. He gave me the high sign and killed the character with the rifle grenades and we made another rush before we got pinned down again by a light machine gun."

She was not bored, but she was surfeited. She was annoyed with Gus for bringing all this up after she had decided he was a decent, uninspired, apathetic young man.

"Won't anybody ask me to dance?" she said, a little more sharply than she had intended.

To her surprise, it was McGivern who did. He took her ably around the floor and she ventured a pert compliment.

He snorted. "Where do you think the Charleston came from?" he asked. "My generation, young lady. Why shouldn't I be able to dance." And after a silence, "He's a very pleasant young man. I believe there's more to him than you think."

She stayed silent, refusing to be drawn into debate.

Jim Henschel took a swig of the punch and watched Joy glide across the floor with Joe Fry, with his blond crew-cut hair, his well-cut dinner jacket.

One of the young men joined him at the punchbowl and accepted a cup. The scent he exhaled was not of claret cup but of Scotch. Henschel wished he had some. The young man said, "Warm, isn't it? For the time of year."

Henschel turned and saw that he was wearing a dark maroon dinner jacket. "Yes," he said. And, "Ah, that's the latest thing?"

The young man shrugged. "Friend gave it to me. I don't know if I'd wear it in New York, but it'll do *pour épater le bourgeoisie d'Eleuse*."

"French major?" asked Henschel sourly.

He grinned. "Fisher and Fisher second lieutenant. Bright young man. Also a little drunk. Which reminds me. If you'd care to step out to the parking lot I've got an opened bottle of Lord Randall."

"Let's go," Henschel said recklessly.

Going down the Lambs House steps they exchanged names. The young man was named Boyleston. Boyleston said, "Didn't think you were a student, Henschel. Unmistakable air of intelligence. You got a publisher? No? Try Fisher and Fisher. Play your cards right, you can get that old bastard Cumberland for your editor. My boss."

"I want a drink, not a publisher. I can't write."

"No talent?"

"None whatever."

"Makes it a little more difficult," Boyleston brooded. They reached his car, a little Volkswagen convertible. He snapped his fingers. "Got it. You can be an anthologist. Now let's have that drink."

They each gurgled down some excellent Scotch. Boyleston carefully replaced the bottle under a camel's hair coat and they crunched back across the gravel.

"Who's your girl here?" Henschel asked bitterly, remembering.

"A thing named Ann Riker. Don't misunderstand, Henschel; if I liked girls I might conceivably like Riker. She's doing a novel for us. Had the infernal gall to write old man Cumberland asking him to dispatch me up here for this

witches' sabbath. *He* thought it was funnier than hell, and sent me. Well, it goes on the expense account and I'm living life to the hilt." The young man's arm on his had become distasteful to Henschel; he was glad Boyleston took it away as they came under the lighted portico.

"Who is that guy?" Joe Fry wanted to know as he swung Joy around the floor. "His face fell a mile when I told him you were my girl and he's just been hovering ever since where he thinks I can't see him and glaring at us. He seems to be gone now, thank God. Joy, you haven't been encouraging him or anything, have you? I mean, a teacher, my God!"

"Joe, darling," she cooed putting her face close to his, "don't be a sweet, utter, lovable absolute fool. I was in his class last semester and I think perhaps he fell for irresistible li'l ole me for a while, say a week, but since the damper's been turned down and he's come to his senses."

"Glad to hear it," Joe grunted. "Look, here he comes in again with that character in the red dinner jacket. Friend of his?"

"I don't think so. The character's the date of a girl named Ann Riker."

"Ann Riker," Boyleston said heavily to Jim Henschel, "is a comer. All the ing-ingredients for success. Pretty face, good figure. She's in with the little review crowd and they take care of their own. Critical success assured by the latter fact, popular success by the former. So naturally when she sent us fifty pages and a synopsis of her novel we snapped her up. But oh, Henschel, if you'd seen the covering letter you would have vomited. Her gracious highness had considered the trade publishers and concluded that Fisher and Fisher was, if not the ablest, certainly the most honorable. Old Cumberland turned purple as a Concord grape, but he sent her a contract."

"How's the book?" Henschel asked absently, his eyes again on Joy and Joe Fry.

Boyleston shrugged. "A girl's novel. There's a vicious old woman in a stone house in Carmel, California, who spins her web through the town, poisoning lives and wrecking careers and reputations. Title, *The Weaver*, and the thing reeks with

spider symbolism, images about drinking blood, draining living juice. If you ask me, Henschel," said Boyleston, "the girl's *queer*."

"Gus Sprayragen? I'm pleased to meet you at last," said Ann Riker.

"Likewise," Gus said. "Uh, I understand you're being very good to Kathryn."

"High time somebody was," Ann said briskly. "A person of her sensitivity and brains deserves encouragement."

"Yes," he said eagerly. "I always thought so."

Kathryn said, "Really, Gus, don't talk me over like that."

"I'm sorry, Kathryn."

"You're an engineer, aren't you, Mr. Sprayragen?"

"No, Miss Riker; I'm a machinist. I run a big lathe mostly, turning forgings into car axles, but I can do anything at all on a drill press or a shaper or the vertical and horizontal milling machines."

"Yes," she said, and Gus knew he had talked too much, that she was politely smothering her amusement at his idea that anybody could possibly be interested in such things.

Kathryn glowered at him and said pointedly, "Ann, isn't that your date over there?"

Ann purposely misunderstood. "Why, yes. Come along and meet him."

Kathryn looked angrily at Gus, and Gus shrugged humbly to Kathryn, and they trailed around the perimeter of the floor after Ann. That fellow? Gus wondered. The one in the red coat? Sure enough, Ann was introducing them.

"Mr. Boyleston, Mr.—uh—Sprayragen. Mr. Boyleston, you'll be interested in meeting Mr.—uh—Sprayragen. He's a mechanic, of all the droll things!"

"Machinist," Gus corrected automatically, sniffing. Perfume? And a red coat. And a handshake that clung.

"God, Sprayragen, don't apologize," Boyleston chattered. "Somebody has to do those things. Anyway, we're all specialists nowadays, so what does it matter what we specialize in? Just so we know our fields."

"Sure," Gus agreed, wrenching his hand away. He did know his field; and he knew fish when he smelled it, too. Now what, he wondered, brought this thing to a dance with

girls? And even more interesting, what sort of thing would invite this thing? He transferred his attention from Boyleston to Ann.

Boyleston was saying, most properly, "Sprayragen, I'd like you to meet Mr.—Mr.—Good lord," he demanded, "where did Henschel get to? He was standing here just a moment ago?"

Ann said demurely, "I think he saw an opportunity to get Joy away from Joe College. And have you noticed that Clara and Dr. Crouch are missing? If you want my opinion, the shrubbery is loaded with missing persons by now. After all," she laughed, "what else are these things for? We mustn't be surprised if the boys and girls pair off."

"It would surprise me," said Gus Sprayragen, "if some of them did." He grinned blandly at Ann. He was beginning to get his bearings.

The party was getting noisy and really beginning to move, when a grotesque figure appeared in the doorway. "Poe," breathed a literary-minded sophomore, who had stepped out to a parked car for one quick one too many. "*The Mask of the Red Death*." She giggled.

Dr. Anson appeared from behind the grotesque figure and beamed approvingly. "Looks like a fine party, Mildred," he boomed. "Lovely decorations. Sort of a Mardi Gras theme, isn't it?"

Dr. Matthewson took her eyes off the sophomore, who was now shrinking whitely against her escort. "I believe you're right, Dr. Anson. How clever of you to recognize it!" She daintily took his arm and they moved forward into the room.

Dr. Matthewson's gown was an expensive, lavish, custom-fitted affair from one of Ithaca's best shops—forty-seven years back. Her makeup appeared to have been applied by an idiot child.

"Why, there's that what's-her-name girl," said Dr. Anson. "The one who saved, uh—" he glanced around and lowered his voice, "the one who acted so promptly in the emergency. Splendid girl. I hope she's doing well?"

Dr. Matthewson fiddled with her hearing aid. "I beg your pardon? Oh, look," she exclaimed girlishly. "Claret cup!"

"Allow me to get you some," Dr. Anson said gallantly.

She permitted herself one small frown at his back. Splendid girl, indeed! Kathryn Jackson had stepped too far over the line this time. It wasn't bad enough that she should pollute the Lambs by herself, but she was bringing her nigger-Indian friends along. Let one in, Dr. Matthewson reproached herself, and you open the floodgates; you should have known. She glowered at Gus Sprayragen, who caught her eye and wondered dazedly what he had done now.

And then she sucked in her breath and forgot the mongrel influx of Pooles.

There was McGivern, slumped on a couch, in plain sight of everyone in the room. The beast, she raged. Drunk!

I've got him now!

Dr. Anson looked around bewilderedly. This was the spot, all right. He'd left Mildred right here. But where was she? He drank his own claret cup. After a little while he drank hers too. No doubt, he thought loyally, there was something she had had to attend to. The responsibilities of the head of a really good school like Eleusis were prodigious, he knew. And she would be back. Meanwhile he could enjoy himself, watching the young people dance.

An old man in an ancient tux came up to him. Anson said, fumbling, "Why, hello! It's good to see you again, Mr.—"

"McGivern," said the man. "Dr. Anson, will you take my pulse, please?"

"Why—" The man had his wrist out; Dr. Anson shrugged and touched the spot where the artery swelled against the bone. He frowned. "Have you ever had an E.K.G.?" he demanded. "There's a cardiac—"

"That's right," said the man. "Now will you smell my breath?" He exhaled in the doctor's face.

"Now, see here—"

"No trace of liquor, right? None at all?"

"Why, no. But—"

"Thanks. Remember that, Dr. Anson, please? Now excuse me. I want to talk to someone."

Anson stared after him. He was a cardiac case, all right, pretty far advanced, a bad one; he walked as though he were dragged-out tired. For a moment Dr. Anson almost

went after him. The man ought to be resting, not wandering around a sorority house. But evidently he knew his condition.

Dr. Anson shrugged and forgot him. For a while.

XIX

PUTTING HER face close to Jim Henschel's, Joy cooed, "Jim, darling, don't be a sweet, utter, lovable, absolute fool. We've known each other since we were *babies*. I think perhaps he did fall for irresistible li'l ole me for a while, say a week, but since then the damper's been turned down and he's come to his senses."

Henschel said stubbornly, "Then why did you invite him to the Gambol?"

She said, "Family, Jim. Family. His mother and my mother grew up together."

"All the same—"

"Just kiss me, Jim. Don't talk."

After a while she pushed him away. He said, breathing hard, "Hold on. I've got something here in the glove compartment." He took out something that gurgled. "Sorry," he said. "No glasses."

"Oh, Jim, do you think I *should*? Well—"

She drank.

They heard footsteps on the gravel of the parking area.

"Hell," said Henschel, "this is Grand Central Station. Let's go back of the Science Building."

She balanced intricate probabilities in her head for a brief moment. Jim was sore, but he was calming down. It would drive Joe Fry *crazy* for her to disappear for a few minutes and Joe had a little arm-twisting due him; he'd had the infernal nerve to mention his drive from Cornell as if it had been a heavy burden, as if her company wasn't sufficient compensation for it. And there was the practical matter of her grades in Jim's class. And he was an exciting young man, even though there was no future in it.

"Just for a couple of minutes," she said.

She noticed that he took the bottle as they slipped hand in hand down the Mall, skirting the bright lights of the Lambs House, past the dark gym, down the lane between the gym and the Science Building.

"The landscape gardener who laid this place out," said Jim feelingly, "must have remembered the days of his youth."

He meant the little grove there, very secluded, with room for two. It was dark and you could just hear the five-piece band. They sat on the turf and the place was a desert island for two, most romantic.

"It's a little chilly," Joy complained, laying the groundwork for an early getaway.

"Drink?" he said, and passed her the bottle. "Chase away the chills."

She pretended to drink and passed back the bottle. Jim's hearty gulp was no pretense. He screwed the cap back on the bottle and carefully set it aside. She leaned into his arms. Just for a moment, she told herself. "Careful of my corsage," she warned.

His hand moved along her leg. "Won't touch it," he promised. "I like it better down there."

She giggled and said, "When." It was their private joke; he had told her once to say when and then he'd stop, usually. Tonight he didn't stop.

"Joy," he whispered in her ear, "you said you'd tell me tonight. What's it going to be?"

"Please, Jim," she breathed, "don't force me to make up my mind. I'm so young, there are so many things I want to do, but I *do* like you so much. I don't know what I want, Jim. Please let's wait." She felt his hand clench painfully on her thigh. "That's not nice, Jim," she said sharply. His hand relaxed and moved again. She said softly, "But that is." And it was, she thought. It was very pleasant to lie on the turf in the arms of an urgent young man with knowing hands.

It was a rude shock when he sat her up and moved away, breathing hard. "Let's get back to the dance," he said.

She knew she should—in a moment. "Kiss," she said.

He put his mouth on hers, his left arm around her waist, hard. She liked the kiss and what he was doing with his

hand; her own reached out for him. Just a little more, she thought fuzzily, and then we'll go.

And then Henschel was pressing her down against the sod; my dress, she thought, grass stains, if he'll take his mouth away I'll tell him to stop—

But he didn't stop, and his hand was ripping cloth.

This is crazy, she thought incredulously, absolutely crazy. She tried to push him away and was astonished to find how strong he was. But, it raced through her mind, he's always been so gentle, this *can't* be happening.

It *can't*—

But it was, with hard, burning lips on her mouth, a hoarse voice in her ear, gross weight pressing her down, and an unbelievable pain that was the most surprising thing of all.

Clara and Dr. Crouch stood on the lighted portico of the Lambs House for a breath of air and—for Clara—a cigarette.

"Nice party," Dr. Crouch said politely.

"Nice tennis serve," she said irritably. "Nice table talk. Nice money."

"I beg your pardon?"

"Do engineers have to be such dumb—bastards?" she choked the word out. "That nitwit from R.P.I. Virginia boy. Horses and hounds. 'Wall, ah'll tell y'all, ma'am, we jes' look up them things in ouah li'l ole haind-book. Co'se, we-all know the theory, but whah *com-pute* each li'l problem when y'all kin fahnd it in the li'l haind-book, ah say.' "

"I gather you were talking to an engineer," Crouch said dryly.

She nodded.

"You are now passing through a stage of intellectual arrogance which I experienced during most of 1935. It is a form of blindness to the multi-ordinal nature of mathematics. It makes as little sense as it would for a portrait painter to object to the use of paint for barns and bridges."

"I suppose so," she said rebelliously. "Paul, what about this? You mentioned cycles the other day; I got to thinking about them and it seems to me that 'turns and slides' are still too generalized. So I postulated a line that had direction—"

Crouch listened and wondered. He had merely dropped a mention of the queer sub-branch of geometry queerly called

"turns and slides." It dealt with impossible hippogriffs—"cycles," "patho-circles," "turbines" which had nothing to do with any real turbine ever machined. It was the cloud-cuckooland of geometry, and Clara apparently felt right at home there.

He heard her theorems on directed lines and smiled. "Very good," he said. "Krakauer developed two more, from your second. And what you call 'directed lines' he called 'arrows.'"

"Oh," she said. "It's been done? I'm glad; it was bothering me. I figured that if you were going to be crazy you might as well be crazy all the way."

"That's probably a better slogan for mathematics than Gauss and his 'few but ripe,'" he said appreciatively. "And now shall we go in?"

"To blazes with those idiots," she said. "I've got some questions about Fermat numbers. Let's find a bench on the Mall."

She did have some questions about Fermat numbers. She also had a feeling that she would rise from the bench on the Mall engaged to be married to Dr. Paul Crouch and a long, laborious, happy life among the hippogriffs. The boy from Virginia had been the straw that broke Miss Gwynn Coal and Iron's chronically aching back.

Joy lay and sobbed. Childishly she said, "You hurt me." She was still aching frightfully, and the physical pain was only the hard core of an awful humiliation.

Jim Henschel was crouched a couple of feet away from her, his head on his hands. Without looking up he said dully, "I couldn't stop. I didn't mean to do it, but I couldn't stop."

"What'll I do?" she sobbed. "I'm—I'm not a good girl any more. You ruined me." The feeble, traditional words applied to *her* were agonizing.

"I'll marry you," he said, "if you want."

"Marry *you*?" she shrilled. "Who wants you, you dirty beast? Who *ever* wanted you?" A new disaster crossed her mind. "What if I have a *baby*?"

"I don't know," he said heavily. "I just don't know. Do you want to call the police? I'll wait here. Or in my room. I haven't any place to go." Something occurred to him. He took his handkerchief from his breast pocket and handed it

to her. She snatched it from him and said querulously, "My dress is a wreck. I'll have to sneak in the back way."

"Do you want me to help you?"

She got to her feet, aching. "I can walk," she said venomously, "no thanks to you."

He watched her go. After a moment he remembered something. He scrabbled around in the grass until he found the bottle.

McGivern heard the voices before he saw the couple, though they were trying to whisper. Gus Sprayragen's defensive mumble, Kathryn's furious hiss—he turned around an enormous old forsythia and found them.

He said, "Always I blunder into your privacy in the dark, Kathryn."

Kathryn said, "Mr. McGivern, will you go away, please? We're having a fight."

"Ann isn't worth fighting over," said McGivern. "It was Ann, wasn't it? No, I wasn't eavesdropping."

Kathryn said scathingly, "You didn't have to, did you? You wanted it this way. That's why you made me invite Gus. Sure," she yelled at the boy, "it was his idea! You didn't think *I* wanted you here? God, I knew what would happen. Put a greasemonkey in with decent people like Ann Riker and—"

"Shut up," said McGivern. "Where's Ann?"

"Don't tell me to—"

"*Where's Ann?*" McGivern noticed objectively that he was feeling pretty good. Not so tired, not so old. He was aware that that was a bad sign; it was the whisky feeling for him, the whisky he'd gone back to his room to get. It meant he didn't have much time before the whisky wore off, or—

Kathryn said sullenly, "How do I know? Gus insulted her and she left."

Gus said, "If calling her a d—d Lesbian is insulting her, sure." He was sweating but stubborn, McGivern noticed with approval.

McGivern said, "Tell her, Gus. Tell her what Ann wanted and let her make up her own mind. That perfumed cesspool Riker? Or a human being like Gus here?"

Kathryn flared, "Don't talk that way! Maybe I'm a Poole,

but I stick to my friends. That's the way we nigger-Indians are! I don't care what Ann's—Ann's personal life is, she's been good to me and—"

McGivern said, "You talked Avis Lesoeur into having an abortion."

"I *what?*"

"That's what Ann told Dr. Matthewson—or what Matthewson made of it, anyhow."

Kathryn said, stunned, "But I never—she begged me, Mr. McGivern! I only said—"

"It doesn't much matter, does it? Matthewson's going to expel you, child. And if you argue, Ann's her witness." He took a deep breath. He said, "Where is she? Have you seen her?"

Sprayragen said suddenly, "I think she went to her room, Mr. McGivern. She said she had a headache."

"Thanks." McGivern started to leave; he turned, said, "Talk to her, Gus. Make her listen."

Kathryn stood with her head down.

Talk to her, McGivern had said. But Gus Sprayragen was wiser than that; he moved toward her and held out his arms.

XX

THE PIANO complained to the bass, "One more request for *Stardust* and I'll blow my stack. Jesus, who do they think we are, Shaw? When I was at Juilliard—"

The bass said philosophically, "Well, this is the last set. Better put out the butt."

Gus Sprayragen heard the band begin as he came in the front door, alone. He was feeling pretty good—better, he thought, grinning, than that other girl, that Joy, who had come limping out of the bushes on them. Too bad Kathryn had gone upstairs with her just when things were getting interesting—or no, Gus thought firmly. It wasn't a damn bit too bad. There was plenty of time for that later. What he

had to feel good about was that, for the first time in months, he could hope that there would be a "later."

He looked around the floor, impatient for Kathryn to come back. No sense just standing here. That tall brunette, there; she looked like a better dancer than the clown she was with. He moved briskly onto the floor and tapped the clown on the shoulder.

"Mind?" he asked the brunette cheerfully. "Name's Sprayragen. Call me Gus."

She said doubtfully, "I'm Lucille Conyers. I don't think I—"

He said, "I'm Kathryn Jackson's date, so don't worry. I practically never bite."

Well, she thought critically, at least he *leads*. She had him placed, now; he was the one who had been talking to Ann Riker when she went storming out of the place. And Mr. Boyleston had shut up like a trap when—since it was her duty, as Regent of the chapter—she had politely tried to find out if there had been anything wrong.

She thought vaguely: Maybe I ought to ask him—tactfully, of course—

But it was much pleasanter simply to dance, with someone whose hand on her back neither clutched frantically nor lay there limp, with someone whose feet knew where they were going.

When the band switched tempo and her date cut back in she said, "Thank you very much." Amazing, she thought. I meant it!

Kathryn sneaked down the back stairs and through the service hall. Poor Joy! But she had it coming. She had run the scale from apathy to outrage to the first vague consciousness of guilt in the few minutes while Kathryn was helping her to get comfortable. It was Henschel, of course. Kathryn had seen Joy's date from Cornell wandering lonesomely around the dance floor. But Joy hadn't said it was Henschel and, in a way, that was something to be said for Joy.

The dance was still going on—for a moment Kathryn had been afraid she'd be too late. She didn't want it to be too late. Gus had his faults, but out behind the Lambs House

he had been wonderful, and the least she could do was to let him know she realized it. She found him—incredibly—dancing with Lucille Conyers. And he winked at her without missing a step, and nodded. And fortunately somebody cut in and he was coming toward her.

He boasted, "Another conquest. Kid, I've left a string of broken hearts a mile long in this place." He jerked his head toward the Regent of the Lambs, who caught the gesture and—and *smiled*.

Kathryn said, "Joy's all right. Do you think anybody saw—"

"Kat," he said, "nobody saw, nobody cares, nobody worries. Let's talk about you."

She said absently, with her head on his chest, "For a greasemonkey, you're the best dancer in Eleusis tonight." It was comforting to be with Gus. You didn't have to worry about Joy because he didn't worry. You didn't have to care about what disgrace Dr. Matthewson might mire you in, or what filth the campus might whisper about you because he didn't care. You didn't even have to wonder why Ann Riker—helpful, wise, confident Ann—had taken your confidences and twisted them to pass on to Dr. Matthewson. Gus didn't wonder. . . .

She said suddenly, "Gus, the hotel is lousy, but if you don't have to get back to the shop tomorrow—"

He said, "I already have my reservation. Set your alarm clock, Kat. I'll pick you up at eight o'clock."

And then, she thought comfortably, whatever happens happens.

Dr. Anson said politely to Miss George, "Excuse me, but have you seen Dr. Matthewson?"

Miss George said, "Why, no. Not for fifteen minutes or so. She said she was going out to—hah-hah—beat the bushes. You know how witty she is, Dr. Anson."

"Yes, hah-hah," said Dr. Anson. But he looked grave.

A sudden thought occurred to Miss George. "Doctor," she said with touching apprehension, "you aren't afraid she's had—an attack?"

Dr. Anson snorted. "Her? No! Good for ten, fifteen years. Sound as a dollar."

"Oh," said Miss George.

"Just that she knows I was going to leave before midnight. Well, she'll turn up."

When he shambled off to converse with a high-ranking faculty member Miss George nodded sourly. She surely would.

Boyleston had found another deserted male, Joe Fry. He proposed a toast in claret cup, ladled out by old Mrs. Peddy, whose head was nodding forward now and then as she sat behind the table. "To the ladies, God bless 'em," said Boyleston. "You can't live with 'em and you can't live without 'em." Fry drank conscientiously, but his eyes were still roving in search of Joy.

"Lady love not shown up yet? Mine's missing too." His eyes focused on the stairway. "Or was. I'm afraid I'm about to be rejoined. Here she comes, walking in beauty like the night."

Ann Riker crossed the floor to him smiling brilliantly. "Edgar," she said, "did you think I'd deserted you? It was just a few minutes for a wash and brush-up."

"How veddy, veddy," Boyleston said, swaying a little.

She wagged a finger at him. "Edgar, straighten up and fly right or Mr. Cumberland is going to hear about it."

"I tremble and obey," Boyleston said with distaste. "Shall we dance?"

"Why, thank you!"

They circled the floor slowly. It was full again after an hour of scantier patronage during which Lambs and their gentlemen sat them out or stepped outside for anything from a smoke to a scuffle in the bushes. Everybody had filtered back by now.

"Edgar," she said to Boyleston, "you've been with me all evening and I've enjoyed every second of it."

"Your first statement is as inaccurate as your last, pet."

"I insist at least on the first. You lucky dog, you've been with me all evening, except for a couple of trips to the powder room and a couple of minutes when I went upstairs."

"I am young in years," he said, "but old as the serpent in dealing with lady writers. Nevertheless, this is a new one on me. I've sobered up old Laura Hartz countless times so

she could meet the deadline on her countless novels of heroic pioneer womanhood. I've bailed out Francesca Ortway on countless traffic raps because the dear woman can't seem to get used to the difference between the brake and the accelerator and won't wear glasses. I have, God help me, smirked and chittered at countless parties flung by female scribblers who think it's the height of smartness to have a witty deviate in attendance. But forgive me, Riker, I don't dig the with-you-all-evening bit."

"Ann's scared," she said abruptly, in a high-pitched voice.

"Well, baby-talk won't help whatever it is," he said. Her dancing had suddenly gone to pieces. She was stepping on his feet and on her own; he was practically carrying her. It alarmed him. "Sneak a drink or five upstairs?" he asked, sniffing. "Or blast a stick of tea? This won't do; let me help you." He eased her to a sofa nearby; she sat down like a stick figure.

"Ann did something bad," she said.

"I quite agree," he told her. "And it's title is *The Weaver* and if you ever get it finished *The New New Review* will say it's sensitive and powerful and discerning on many levels of meaning. And you'll have your lovely puss in the *Times* and *Trib* and *Chronicle*. And you'll sell fifty thousand copies and live happily ever after. And goddam it, Riker, you're making me nervous; if you want me to say I've been with you all evening, all right I've been with you all evening, and now will you please snap out of it?"

He was shaking. Riker's eerie stare made him want to rush out, belt a stiff one from the Lord Randall bottle, tramp on the accelerator of the Volks and zoom right straight back to New York.

"You're nice," she said, putting her hand on his arm. Her eyes unfocused from infinity and Hell, and focused on his face. She said tiredly, "Let's finish the dance, Boyleston."

While they finished the dance she absent-mindedly talked about her novel, said she'd have it finished in three months at the most, that it was good but that she wasn't entirely satisfied with the motivations.

This was normal, or what passes for normal with women writers, and Boyleston was greatly relieved.

Clara and Dr. Crouch came sedately into the crowded room.

"Would you care to dance?" he asked her.

"Why, Dr. Crouch," she grinned, "do you think we're well-enough acquainted for that?"

He blushed and said, "I think so."

They moved across the floor and she thought: I mustn't tease him. We're going to be together a long time. Well, now, I'm an engaged woman as well as—what's the word—deflowered. He's a very gentle guy, though, and I think that's what I've wanted.

He proposed, I accepted, and *I'm* the hussy who suggested we seal it on the spot. But *he's* the one who found the place behind the Science Building. Said it had been mentioned to him by a friend, and if I find out it was a female friend I'll scratch her eyes out. But I know it wasn't.

The only thing is, I know damn well I didn't want him so terribly much; what I was looking for was a symbol, something to commit me, a good squirt of saliva in Mama's eye. It was pleasant, though. No wild rapture, but I never was the wild-rapture type. He liked me, I know he liked me, and that's very important.

Crouch unexpectedly kissed her on the neck.

Miss George, watching with a mild smile as they danced by, dropped her punch cup.

Dr. Anson stalked up to her as she was regaining her composure.

"I'm beginning to be a little worried," he said.

"I'm sure," she quavered, "it was perfectly innocent, or a moment of absent-mindedness at worst. Perhaps he is subject to seizures—"

"Eh?" said Anson. "What are you talking about? I mean Dr. Matthewson. Perhaps she stumbled in the dark. She has this arthritis, and her bones aren't any more elastic than those of anybody else her age. She might be lying out there silently—"

Miss George couldn't repress a smile. "Dr. Matthewson?" she asked. "*Silently?*"

Anson paused. "I see what you mean," he said. "Yes. It's not her, ah, style. But she could have hit her head. Something should be done."

The band leader looked at his watch and caught the eye of the Regent of the Lambs. She nodded and began to move about the floor, breaking up couples with a smile and an apologetic word; the Lambs began to form before the dais.

The leader raised his bow and brought it down. The Lambs sang:

Good—night—gentlemen—

A thick figure in an archaic dinner jacket stumped across the floor, rudely pushing through the young men who watched.

McGivern went around left end of the singing Lambs and took the band leader's arm. The music broke off and the girls' singing quavered to a halt.

McGivern faced them from the dais. "I don't think anybody had better leave yet," he said to them all. "I'm sorry to say that Dr. Matthewson has died. I found her outside on the Mall. Her neck seems to have been broken. Will somebody please telephone for the State Police?"

XXI

THE STATE POLICE car crunched on the gravel and stopped slantwise, its motor going, the red light on the top swinging around the green roofs of Eleusis. A trooper with a big electric torch came out and played it on the faces of the ring of undergraduates, faculty members and guests that surrounded the mortal remains of Mildred Matthewson, Ph.D.

Dr. Anson stepped forward. "I'm a doctor," he said numbly. "I examined the body. She's dead." The incredible words echoed. Mildred dead.

"Did you move her?"

"Move her?" Dr. Anson shook his head.

"Keep away from her, please." The trooper raised his voice. "All of you, keep away. Lieutenant Elkus will be here in a minute. You'll all have to stay here. You can wait inside if you want."

He climbed the rear steps of the Lambs House and looked around. "You!" he called. "Come here a minute, please."

Henry advanced out of the parking space into the light. "Me, sah?"

"That's right." The trooper said, "You watching the cars? Has anybody tried to take one out?"

Henry thought. "No, sah," he said doubtfully.

"You sure?"

"Well, sah—" Henry looked around, and lowered his voice as he answered.

The trooper said impatiently, "Never mind about where you were an hour ago. Anybody driven off since then?"

"No, sah."

"All right. Don't let anybody leave until the lieutenant talks to him, understand?"

Gus said to Kathryn, "Come on, honey. Let's go inside."

They were a little late; all the seats were taken. Gus led her by the hand halfway up the staircase and they sat. Kathryn stared blindly at the somber knots and couples in the Common Room. Gus stared at Kathryn.

He said, "Listen, Kat." She glanced at him abstractedly. He said, keeping his voice down, "Go up and talk to Joy. Tell her what's happened. You were with her about ten minutes—call it fifteen. Make sure she says fifteen when they talk to her. Understand? Fifteen minutes, and then you came downstairs, and we danced."

"What?" she said blankly.

"You have to be covered, don't you see? It's all right for all the rest of the night—I was right there with you; but make sure about Joy. Fifteen minutes. If she won't go for that—" he hesitated, "I mean, if she thinks it was less, tell me. But *hurry up*. After this lieutenant gets here we may not have much chance to talk."

She said, "For God's sake, Gus, you don't—"

"Go ahead. Christ a'mighty, Kat," he said passionately, "what do I care what you did or didn't do? Don't kid yourself. They'll find out who was where, and if you don't have a good answer for them you'll have a rough time. Go on. Now."

He got rid of her, and then he relaxed a little. All right, he thought grimly, we're ready. Kill the old bitch? No,

Kathryn hadn't killed her. Of course she hadn't, he told himself. It was just a matter of staying out of trouble. Those fifteen or twenty minutes were plenty to get her tail in a sling if his times and Joy's times didn't mesh. Anyway, even if she had been excited enough to do something crazy, what difference—

She hadn't. Gus leaned forward; he could see another car outside now, two red lights flickering around the roofs. He looked worriedly up the stairs—what was keeping her?

The lieutenant removed Boyleston's hand from his shoulder. "Sorry," he said. "Now, who—"

"Please, Lieutenant," Boyleston said thickly. "I have to get out of here. It's a stinking drive to New York, and I absolutely must be—"

The lieutenant jerked his head and one of the troopers took the publisher's bright young man away. Ann Riker stepped forward, smiling, to claim him.

"He yours? Keep him quiet, will you? Murder or no murder, if anybody catches him driving like that he's in trouble."

Ann said, "Trust me, officer. Now, Edgar, let's go inside, shall we?" She led him away by the arm, toward the Lambs House.

McGivern came toward the lieutenant. "You looking for me?" he asked. "I'm the one who found the body." He grabbed at the doorpost to steady himself.

The lieutenant sniffed. The lieutenant had sniffed enough breaths one time or another, to be able to gauge the precise number of ounces, the degree of intoxication, and very nearly the brand and kind of mixer, if any, involved. Old soak; three or four good-sized belts; pretty recent. That figured. If you stumble over a body you might easily want a drink—especially if you'd wanted as many in your life as this man. "All right," he said. "Tell me about it."

McGivern marshaled his facts. "I had a bottle in the kitchen," he said matter-of-factly. "I was getting pretty loaded so I headed for home—the back way. I heard somebody running, and that seemed funny, so I took a look. There she was."

"Did you see who was running?"

"Officer," McGivern grinned, "I was blind."

The lieutenant said to one of the troopers, "Holtz! See if you can find some coffee for this gentleman. I think there's some back that way." The trooper conducted McGivern away through the ring of grinning undergraduates.

The lieutenant had taken the Chapter Room for his command post over the protests of the Regent and the sister officers. He interviewed Dr. Anson first. Even a lieutenant of state police understood the importance of kid-glove handling of the head of the Anson Clinic. He established, pending arrival of the G.P. who doubled as police surgeon when there was any need for one, that the death had been due to fracture of the cervical vertebrae and/or strangulation—the crepey old neck showed very little, so it was hard to tell.

The trooper who let Dr. Anson out said, "I got the cook to make coffee for everybody. They'll need it."

"All right, Holtz." The lieutenant considered for a second. "We'll take them in bunches for a starter. Pick out three or four teachers and bring them in. Oh—and, Holtz! Get me some coffee too."

The lieutenant sighed and turned over a page in his notebook. Twelve o'clock, he thought sourly. Why can't people kill each other at a decent time?

The trooper rapped on the door and called, "Anybody in there? Will you come downstairs, please?"

Joy opened it and came out, fully dressed. "I'm on my way down," she said. From the stairs she saw Jim Henschel sitting by himself on one of the Lambs' Louis XIV chairs. She passed him without a word and crossed the room to sit beside a sister in the corner of a sofa.

"Betcha it's a false alarm," the sister chattered. "The old gal must have tripped and broken her neck."

The Lamb in the other corner said, "I was there when Dr. Anson examined her. Homicide, he said. Somebody grabbed her from behind and twisted until she was dead and then rolled her under the bushes."

"Stop it!" Joy exploded. Was there nothing but violence and violation in the world? Some day she might be able to forget, but this was scraping the still-raw wound.

"Sorry," the girl said, and looked at her dubiously. "You're not your usual sunny self, Squires."

She managed a smile. "Don't feel up to snuff," she said.

"You've changed your dress," the sister said, making conversation.

"Yes," she said, and leaned forward and began to cry.

Across the room Jim Henschel saw and half-rose.

A trooper lounging in the doorway saw them both, and went to the Chapter Room to murmur in Lieutenant Elkus' ear. "Bring 'em in," said the lieutenant.

When they sat before him he said gently, "A very serious crime has been committed. Trooper Hodges says you two appear to be the most upset people in the place. You were crying, Miss Squires. You were very jumpy about her crying, Dr. Henschel. Now, I don't care to lose any time by being told that Miss Squires was crying because she's sorry for dear old Dr. Matthewson. I've asked a few questions, and it's become quite clear that dear old Dr. Matthewson was a—difficult person." A police officer could not refer to the corpus delicti as a repulsive, meddling old bitch. "Now, Dr. Matthewson was not a strong woman; she was frail. A child of twelve could have broken her neck. I'm afraid this means that we must consider women as suspects. Miss Squires, would you care to explain why you're particularly upset this evening?"

"Leave me alone," she said, and began to cry again.

"We'll have to have a time-table of your movements for tonight," Lieutenant Elkus said gently. "So we can compare it with the others'. I'm sorry to say that you're the logical starting place, Miss Squires. Did you come down the stairs with the other girls and sing that song with them?"

She could not answer for sobbing.

"Stop it," Henschel said to the lieutenant. "If you'll clear these other people out I'll tell you what this is about."

Lieutenant Elkus nodded at the sergeant, who said, "Outside, everybody."

Lieutenant Elkus glanced at Henschel and eased his .38 in his holster before the door closed. "Well?" he asked softly.

"She had nothing to do with Dr. Matthewson," Henschel said shortly. "She's upset because I—assaulted her. About

an hour and a half ago. I'm ready to take my medicine. She had nothing to do with Dr. Matthewson's death."

"You're admitting to a felony," Lieutenant Elkus said.

Henschel said with passionate self-loathing, "I'm admitting I was a beast and a fool. What is it in this state, Lieutenant? Twenty years to life?"

"Situational rape," Lieutenant Elkus said tiredly to himself. "Same rap as a real case, in spite of common sense." Well, the wheels had begun to turn. A felony was a felony. To Joy he said, "What about this, Miss Squires? Did you and Mr. Henschel have relations?"

She nodded, staring at him.

"And was this relations against your will, caused by force or such threats that you were in fear of your life?"

She said nothing; the tears were drying on her face. Twenty years to life, she thought. Situational rape. And who had made the situation if not she? Who had teased and tormented Jim Henschel to the point of violence? Who had caressed him and promised and withdrawn the promise repeatedly? It was like clean light breaking through a fog of nastiness that was herself.

"He's mistaken," she said in a clear, shrill voice. "I did protest and struggle, yes. But it was an act. He couldn't have taken me if I hadn't wanted him to. There's nothing to this, lieutenant."

Lieutenant Elkus refrained from pointing out that the admission had been torn from a man who faced a generation behind bars. He said, "We could have you medically examined, Miss Squires, but there's no possibility of a rape case sticking without a complainant. Do I understand that you make no complaint?"

"None at all," she said shrilly. And then with more control of her voice, "Dr. Henschel simply misunderstood the—situation."

"You two can go," Lieutenant Elkus said. "We'll call you back later."

Outside, when the troopers had gone in and left them a moment of privacy, they faced each other.

"Joy," Henschel said slowly, "was that the truth?"

She spat at him, "No. You were a filthy beast. All I meant was that I should have known better than to trust myself

with you. Baboon!"

"Bitch," he said.

"I hope you enjoyed it. It's the last you'll see of me outside classes."

"As a matter of fact I didn't enjoy it one damn bit. And speaking of classes, from now on you'll prepare your work or you'll flunk."

"Naturally," she said coldly. "You were a fool to handle it any other way."

He gave way on the stairs and she swept down before him, he following, both of them a little further from adolescence, a little closer to maturity, he a good deal less of a baboon and she a good deal less of a bitch, both of them understanding themselves and each other a great deal better than before.

I was a fool, Henschel thought sourly. I'm lucky to have got off this easily. The next girl I look for will have some brains and some natural passion, if necessary at the cost of a perfect artificial face and a thorough grounding in the art of the tease.

I was a fool, Joy thought sourly. I'm lucky to have got off this easily. I shouldn't have messed with Jim; the stakes were too low for the risks. Virginity against a few beers, some smooching and an English grade. I wish my gut would stop aching. Well, I've got away without any publicity and it's just possible that I had it coming to me, the way I teased him. Maybe I'm beginning to grow up.

Miss George was questioned, squeaked with genteel horror at the thought of her possible implication in any assault on dear Dr. Matthewson and, being able to account minute by minute for her time, was dismissed to wait. She whistled as she went down the stairs. There was going to be one step up the line for quite a number of people, she thought, and Eleusis Academy for Women might conceivably become a first-rate school again. Her whistle shut off automatically when she came in sight of Dr. Anson, brooding majestically at the foot of the stairs.

He took her arm and said compulsively, "What I can't understand is, who could have done it? Everybody loved her so!"

"An ornament to her profession," Miss George, chameleon-like, gravely agreed. "A profound scholar."

"A fine example of the best old Eastern stock." Dr. Anson looked strangely shy. "You know," he said, "I'm just a kid from a prairie town. I've made some professional progress, I've built an institution some people are kind enough to think well of and I've made some money. But this place is my *life*. I won't rest until the killer's tracked down."

McGivern put his hand on the doctor's arm. "It's only a matter of time," he told the doctor.

"What? Oh, Mr. McGivern."

"That's right. You won't have to bother about my breath now, Dr. Anson. It doesn't matter any more."

Dr. Anson stared after him. "He smells like a distillery. Miss George, does he always act as oddly as this?"

Miss George cheeped, "We're all so upset, Dr. Anson. This terrible blow—"

Experimentally she squeezed out a tear.

Dr. Anson, moved, said, "The old place just won't ever be the same again, will it?"

"You're so right, Dr. Anson," said Miss George.

XXII

TROOPER HOLTZ was offended. He said, "Lieutenant, I *tried* to sober him up. How did I know he was lacing his coffee with rye?"

Mr. McGivern said, "I give you my word I'm sober enough for your purposes, Lieutenant. And I want to talk to you."

"That makes two of us," said Lt. Elkus. "I'm listening. Start with where you were when Dr. Matthewson was last seen in the ballroom."

"All right. Let me sit down." Trooper Holtz sullenly pushed over a chair. McGivern sat in it gratefully; there had been an awful lot of standing that night. And an awful lot of walking around, and running, and excitement—and,

he admitted to himself, quite a lot of drinking, more than he usually allowed himself.

But he didn't care. He said, "I think I was the last person the old bag talked to in the ballroom, Lieutenant. She had the impression I was drunk."

The lieutenant said sourly, "How strange."

McGivern grinned. "But I wasn't, Lieutenant. I have heart trouble. I was resting, damn near knocked out. And I can prove it."

"You'll get your chance," the lieutenant promised. "Where did you go from there?"

"After Dr. Matthewson left me? Outside. I was out behind the Lambs Building for a few minutes. Kathryn Jackson can verify that."

The lieutenant's jaw fell open. "My God," he groaned. "Not you too! What the hell *else* do you people teach in this place?"

"No, no," McGivern said amiably. "I merely was asking for Miss Riker. Kathryn didn't know where she was, so I went looking. I found her in her room. She was—upset." He paused, remembering just how upset Ann had been. "She was furious at me—I thought at first because I was upstairs, where I wasn't supposed to be. But it turned out she had been insulted, or thought she had, by Kathryn's boy-friend." He cleared his throat. "The boy called her a Lesbian."

Lt. Elkus demanded, "Was she?"

McGivern nodded. "She had been expelled from her last school for making a pass at one of the girls, Lieutenant. And Dr. Matthewson found out about it; and she was going to have her expelled. I guess I was sticking my nose in where it didn't concern me. But I was sore at Matthewson anyhow. I wanted to warn Riker." And that, he thought, was the only part of the story that was an outright lie; for it wasn't Ann who was in danger of being expelled.

Lt. Elkus said searchingly, "You sure you didn't just want to start trouble for Matthewson?"

Score one for the lieutenant, who wasn't any dope. McGivern shrugged. "Same thing, isn't it? I didn't particularly like Riker, no. But I liked Matthewson a lot less. So I warned Riker; and she took it hard; and the last I saw of her she had just thrown me out of her room and slammed

the door in my face. I had my bottle in the kitchen. About twenty minutes later I headed for home. And that brings you up to date."

He leaned forward. "Lieutenant," he said earnestly, "I would have knocked Matthewson off for a nickel. I had plenty of opportunity, too. All I want you to do is talk to Riker before you make your mind up about me."

"I'll do that," Lt. Elkus said grimly. "Go get her, Holtz."

Five minutes later Holtz came back. "She ain't there, Lieutenant," he reported. "I asked all over the place. Nobody's seen her for a while."

"Stay put," Lt. Elkus ordered McGivern. He hurried out, and nearly knocked Gus Sprayragen over.

"You looking for Ann Riker?" Gus demanded.

"Do you know where she is?"

"No, but let me help look. She's nuts, Lieutenant. I know what she looks like. I'll help you find her."

He wasn't really needed. Half the Lambs House was looking for Ann Riker now; Trooper Holtz had made it clear she was missing. But he tagged along. To the kitchen, where nobody was in the pantry, nobody was in the room-refrigerator, nobody was under the sink. To the front door and the rear door, where there were lots of people, but not Ann. To all of the downstairs rooms where the Gambol had flowed. And still no Ann.

Gus said, "She's hiding, Lieutenant! I'll lay you five to one she knows you're looking for her!"

The second floor, and by now they were split up in posses, methodically combing the rooms. No Ann in the hall, no Ann in the broom closet, the linen closets, the backstairs landing. No Ann in the bedrooms nearest the stairs.

The door to Ann's own room was closed.

Kathryn started to turn the knob, but Gus snatched her away. "This is it, huh? You wait outside!" he ordered fiercely. He twisted the knob delicately, hurled the door open from one side.

Empty.

Lt. Elkus shoved him out of the way and walked in. No one in the closets, no one under the bed. Trooper Holtz reached for the knob of the bathroom.

And stopped.

He called hoarsely, "Lieutenant! Somebody's in there. You hear?"

They were quiet; they could all hear. Somebody was breathing loudly and raggedly, almost sobbing. Lt. Elkus ordered, "You in there! Come out!"

Pause. And then the door opened.

"My God, Lieutenant," said Trooper Holtz, "it's that swishy."

Boyleston sobbed, "Officer, thank God you . . . got . . . here." He fell to the floor in a faint.

"Wake him up," Lt. Elkus ordered. "Find out if he knows where Riker is."

Holtz took a powder-blue towel from the rack, soaked it in the basin and with a certain air of satisfaction slammed it against Boyleston's face with a thwack. Boyleston stirred and groaned; Holtz hastily repeated the maneuver twice while he could.

"That's enough," Lt. Elkus said sharply.

Holtz grinned and elaborately shook out the towel and hung it up again.

Boyleston looked around and sat up. "Have you got her?"

"Miss Riker?" asked the lieutenant. "No. What happened?"

"She's crazy. She had a carving knife from the kitchen. We were down in the common room. She said she wanted some coffee, she'd get some in the kitchen and come back. That was when she got the knife, I suppose. But you don't know yet—before that she tried to get me to say I'd been with her all evening, which I wasn't. She said this before Dr. Matthewson's body was found, but my God, I didn't even put two and two together or I'd have told you about it as soon as you showed up. I was a little drunk.

"Then when she came back from the kitchen with her bolero on her arm and, of course, that goddam knife under it, she asked me to help her up the back stairs, she was feeling faint, wanted to lie down, if you people wanted to question her you could come and get her. That sounded fair enough to me. We went upstairs, I helped her to the door of

her room and then she started in with that business about how I was with her all evening.

"I was sober by then—soberer, at least. It clicked and I began to humor her, intending to come *flying* to you the second I could. I guess I overdid it. She dropped her bolero and there was this eight-inch boning knife."

He shuddered and looked around. "Has anybody got a drink?"

The officers looked stonily back at him. He sighed and went on, "There were no damn-fool heroics from *me*. Somehow she'd got me backed against the door. I reached behind and opened it and tried to close it on her. Lieutenant, I'd always thought it was a quaint Dickensian conceit that madmen had the strength of three, but—she did. She pushed the door open against all my weight. I kept talking to her, trying to reason; I was afraid to yell. She didn't answer, but she was making a horrible panting noise. That knife—

"When the door was far enough open for her to slip in I let go and ran for the bathroom. I managed to lock the door. I heard her very patiently scraping and whittling at it with that knife for a while and then I didn't hear anything. I sat here petrified and waited. And then I heard you people."

"That's all?" asked Lt. Elkus.

"Isn't it enough?" Boyleston shrilled.

"I meant," the lieutenant said patiently, "you have no further information for us?"

"None," said the young man fervently. "Except—well, she's been having seizures and this was one of them. Her voice changes and her face becomes rigid." He hesitated and went on in a little burst of confidence. "I have a friend who had to be hospitalized because of conflicts arising out of a certain—uh—psychological problem. I've visited him a few times. Miss Riker reminded me of him at his worst. I don't have any doubt that she's insane."

Lt. Elkus said, "Thanks, Mr. Boyleston. I'm glad you came out of this with a whole skin." He swung the bathroom door and inspected its outside. He saw the slices of the knife in the handsome hardwood. "You can go downstairs now. We'll try to find Miss Riker. At least we have an assault case against her."

"Assault?" said Boyleston. "Don't you think she killed the old woman? Why else did she want me to lie?"

"Who knows?" asked Lt. Elkus. "Holtz, call the station and have them put an alarm on the teletype net. Tell them I am requesting fifteen additional men to apprehend a mentally disturbed person armed with a knife."

Holtz left and Lt. Elkus curiously studied the door again. The knife was sharp; it had sliced deep.

A trooper came in and saluted. "Lieutenant, a colored handyman that works here just walked in with a knife-cut in his arm. He saw the gal and she cut him. We got him in that waddaya-callit room where you were before."

Holtz hurried down the stairs to the Chapter Room.

Old Henry was sitting very composedly in the Regent's chair of state and Dr. Anson and the school nurse were bandaging his left arm. The old man was no stranger to the lieutenant.

"Hello, Henry. What happened?"

"Danged if I know," Henry said, scratching his head.

The lieutenant sat down and leaned forward. "Henry," he said earnestly, "this is Eddie Elkus that played with your kids in grammar school. I know you're smarter than any professor in the Academy, so you can just drop the Uncle Tom bushwah. This is a homicide investigation. Don't worry about your job or the good name of the school; just worry about what I ask you. Now, what happened?"

The amiable smile vanished from Henry's face. "If you put it that way, Edward," he said, "I can't very well refuse you. After you uniformed gentlemen had things on ice I was able to go about my work; all that remained was to fix the Administration Building furnace for the night. Normally I'd have done that by eight o'clock and gone home, but there was the Gambol and the cars to be parked. I let myself into the Ad Building basement entrance with my pass key, and didn't lock the door behind me. I suppose that was foolish, but somehow I never have. I banked the fire and was ready to leave when I saw a girl watching me. She must have followed me in, of course. I recognized her as Miss Riker. Not that I know every young lady in school, but Miss Riker has called me a couple of names that are hard to forgive and forget."

He winced as Dr. Anson gave the bandage a final tightening yank. "Thank you, doctor," he said. "That feels fine." He went on to Lt. Elkus, "I said something or other about what on earth are you doing here, and shouldn't you get back to the Lambs House. She just stared at me like a zombie, and then I saw she had a knife."

"Eight-inch boning knife?" asked the lieutenant.

"That's right, as far as I could see it. I tried to talk her into giving it to me and for a while I thought I was making some progress. But—" He grinned wryly. "She cut me instead. And do you know what I was thinking when she cut me? I was thinking that here I am, a Negro, fifty-seven years old, never in a razor scrape, not a scar on me, and when I *do* get cut it's by a white college gal for no reason at all."

"Cut out the crap," Trooper Holtz said. "Get on with the story."

"I'm handling the questioning, Holtz," said Lt. Elkus mildly, "and if you ever want to make corporal you'd better learn to watch your mouth. Go on, Henry."

The old man shrugged. "I ran. I slammed the basement door on her, but that doesn't mean anything because I dropped my keys."

"Thanks, Henry," Lt. Elkus said. "I think you can go home now."

When the handyman was gone Dr. Anson said promptly to the lieutenant, "What about the rest of us? Can't we go as well?"

Lt. Elkus said, "I'm puzzled, doctor. Do you think the girl was capable of homicide?"

"Evidently she was a raving lunatic," the doctor said briefly. "I gather she's tried to kill two persons that we know of."

"She's made passes at them with a knife," the lieutenant corrected him. "I always thought I had a feel for a killer. Well, I've been wrong before."

"Then we can go?"

"Not yet," the lieutenant apologized. He said to a trooper, "Take three men and get over to the Administration Building. Cover the doors. I'll join you later." His guess was that the enigmatic Ann Riker was prowling the dark building, barring any report from his men patrolling the wall.

He walked to the commons room where Lambs and their guests and a couple of faculty members and the band, talked out, were sprawling and snoozing.

The bandleader buttonholed him as he climbed the dais. "Can't we get out of here yet, Lieutenant?"

"Not yet." The lieutenant raised his voice. "Wake up everybody. Will you wake up, please?" The erect figures nudged the sprawling ones. Beyond the lieutenant, the percussionist slow-rolled the rim of his snare drum, until the lieutenant turned and glared at him.

The lieutenant said, "Folks, I'm sorry to keep you here, but it may not be much longer. You girls can go to your rooms now, if you like. The rest of you stay here, please. I don't care where you go in the house, but nobody goes out of it." He jumped off the dais and headed for the door.

There were five cars with whirling red lights now. A trooper with a flashgun was just finishing his shots of the body, and the police surgeon was supervising backing his ambulance to pick it up. Across the way all the lights were on in the DXK house; but they were staying put.

Nearly three o'clock. It would have been nice, the lieutenant thought, if it was nearer sun-up. He didn't like crazy kids with knives in the dark. A husky man with a gun—that was something else. You could go up against something like that with at least the knowledge that if you had to shoot there was some reason for it. But who wanted to kill a twenty-year-old girl? And yet, at close quarters, in the dark, it could happen.

But he couldn't stall. He had to get this out of the way, he thought fuzzily, so he could get on with looking for whoever killed the Matthewson woman.

He shook his head and glanced around sharply. Eddie, he told himself, you're flipping too. Open and shut. She had the motive. She had the means. She's crazy; and she tried to rig an alibi. Why make trouble for yourself?

He headed for the Administration Building, where Ann Riker had last been seen. All the same, he told himself, she didn't *smell* like a killer.

There were thirty rooms in the Ad Building, stairways, closets, halls, utility rooms and other fine hiding places not

included. There was the basement—piled high with stacks of three-legged chairs and worn-out classroom furniture; that was pack-rat Matthewson. But it was also well-lighted, and there was space to move around; that was Henry. And there was no one there.

The first floor; by then the first dozen additional troopers had arrived, and they went through it like a dose of salts. No one there. No sign that anyone had hidden there. Lt. Elkus remembered what Henry had said about the basement door being unlocked, and swore. If they pulled a blank here and had to rout out the whole campus. . . .

But on the second floor, paydirt. "Hey, Lieutenant!" Elkus came hurrying. "Take a look in here, Lieutenant," said the trooper.

Some sort of an office—Dr. Matthewson's, of course; her name was on the door. Everything was ripped up. File cabinets were dumped on the floor; desk drawers pulled out. The cherished manuscript copy of General Stubb's Order Book, in shreds on the floor.

"I'd guess," McGivern said wearily from over the lieutenant's shoulder, "that she was looking for something. A letter from her old school, perhaps."

Lt. Elkus snapped, "Stay out of the way." Well, that was that. She had been in here, all right.

"Go on, keep looking!" A couple of the other troopers were looking toward him, waiting for something to happen. Lt. Elkus noticed that their hands were close to their gun-butts. Damn it to hell, he thought, they know better than that. He took a breath to yell at them, then remembered: She isn't far. She can hear. No sense letting her know I don't want them to shoot.

He hurried down the hall to the troopers. "Watch yourselves! Take the knife away from her, that's all. Any man that fires a shot is up before a court of investigation in the morning. Don't hurt her. I want to talk to her."

Too late.

From the other end of the corridor, he heard a yell, a shot, confused shouting.

Trooper Holtz blazed, "Lieutenant, I would've got her but this old son-of-a-bitch grabbed my arm!"

"Shut up." Lt. Elkus yanked McGivern to his feet, from where Holtz had knocked him. "What's the idea?"

McGivern wheezed, "I—I—he would have killed her."

"Get out of here, McGivern!" yelled the lieutenant. But thank Heaven you were here just now, he added, silently. To Holtz: "Where was she?"

"Up those stairs." The trooper waved. He ejected the spent cartridge in his gun, threw in a fresh one, slapped the cylinder back in place. "I'll go up and—"

"Holtz! Go on downstairs. Keep an eye on McGivern—but *don't touch him*. Understand?" yelled the lieutenant.

Holtz protested, "Holy Jesus, Lieutenant, I was jus—"

"*Go on!*" The lieutenant was shaking. Crazy, sadistic bastard! Let him go up—sure—and there would be a dead girl in two minutes; she wouldn't have a chance and Holtz would be in the clear because of her knife, a deadly weapon. Self-defense.

A dead girl. And a neat solution to the murder of Dr. Matthewson. And he could go home and go to sleep. It would have been nice, the lieutenant thought regretfully. For everybody except the girl, of course.

Kathryn Jackson ran forward and helped McGivern sit down on the steps. "What's happened?" she demanded.

McGivern tried to catch his breath. "She's up there," he said. "I saw her. This—officer tried his heroic best to murder her."

Trooper Holtz snarled belligerently, "Now listen here, you old—" Then he remembered how unreasonable Lt. Elkus was. He spat on the ground and walked stiffly away.

"What are they going to do?"

McGivern closed his eyes. "She's on the third floor—Dr. Matthewson's apartment. They're going up after her. They—Kathryn!" He tried to get up; but he simply could not make it. She was in the door.

"They'll stop her," a trooper told him. "Don't worry, Pop."

McGivern tried to scowl at the young poop; but there wasn't even that much strength left in him. Jimmy, he told himself, why don't you go get a drink? That's about all you'd need, now. And, judging by the queer flutterings in his chest,

he thought objectively: You might not even need that much.

Kathryn raced up the stairs; a trooper yelled at her, but that was all. It crossed her mind: *Funny if one of them thinks I'm Ann—*

But before she had a chance to worry about it, she was on the second floor; and the lieutenant was staring at her.

She said breathlessly, "Please, I'm her roommate. Let me talk to her. She'll listen to me if she will to anybody."

Lt. Elkus hesitated. Well, why not? Unless this Riker was a knife thrower in addition to her other accomplishments, the girl would be all right if she didn't get too close. . . . "You can go as far as the landing," he said. "No farther! Tell her to toss the knife down to you. Then you throw it down here, and tell her to come down. We won't hurt her."

"All right," Kathryn panted. She took a quick look around, smiled faintly at the lieutenant, and started up the stairs.

There was a yellowed electric bulb, not more than fifteen watts, hanging at the landing. These were the private stairs to Dr. Matthewson's living quarters. Kathryn had never seen them, though she had heard stories from the girls—rat's nest, trashcan, fire-trap, haunted house; stories with words like that. The door up the short dog-leg flight past the landing was closed.

Kathryn called, "Ann, can you hear me? It's Kathryn. Ann, answer me, please!"

No answer. No sound anywhere.

Kathryn called, "Ann, honey, everything's going to be all right. Nobody will hurt you if you come out. I promise!"

No answer—unless faint, terrifying controlled weeping was an answer.

Kathryn called down to the lieutenant, "I hear her. She's crying."

"Tell her to come down!"

"Come out, Ann," Kathryn said gently.

"In the taxi," said a hoarse, unrecognizable voice just on the other side of the door. "Ann and Kathryn and Clara and Joy."

"Ann."

"And Kathryn and Clara and Joy."

Kathryn Jackson walked down the stairs, shaking. She told the lieutenant, "She seems to want a couple of other girls."

Clara Gwynn and Joy Squires. She got them in the Lambs—and me too.”

The lieutenant said to a trooper, “Go get them from the Lambs House.” If Riker could be talked into coming out it would be done.

They went downstairs and out on the porch. The air in the building, like a memory of Dr. Matthewson, was old and musty.

Holtz thought rebelliously: Somebody ought to go in and blast her out. What if she started a fire? Pretty howdy-do.

Lt. Elkus’ eyes rested on McGivern. He started. “For God’s sake, man, go to bed.” The face was putty-colored. “Do you want to have a heart attack?”

McGivern smiled serenely at him. “A Sophoclean irony, Lieutenant,” he said, “which, alas, you will never appreciate.”

“Don’t be a wise guy,” Lt. Elkus said grumpily. “I was only thinking of your own good. Stick around if you want.” The old man had saved the poor crazed girl up there from Holtz’ bullet. He began to worry over how to adequately punish Holtz without washing State Police dirty linen in public.

I am the weaver, Ann Riker thought, crouching in the dark. I am the weaver and the glamorous editor of *Magazine X*, spreading my shimmering threadlets through the world of style and letters. How the coutouriers will bow to me, how the young writers will make obeisance! Ann’s in a jam again, a terrible jam this time in the dark, but these things are beneath the concern of the weaver. Ann was in a jam before in California but this one’s worse, she never was in a jam like this before. The taxi brought Ann, thought the weaver, and the taxi will take her away, with Clara and Kathryn and Joy.

Clara Gwynn and Joy Squires were undressing in silence in their shared room after the lieutenant’s permission was given for the girls to leave the common room.

Joy was stiff and grim. She hoisted her dress over her head and off. When she saw herself in the mirror she snatched it to her again. Bruises on her arms and legs where his arms and legs had pressed her down. She hadn’t noticed them for the big pain which still ached in her middle.

There was a business-like knock on the door. "State troopers," a man's voice called. "Miss Squires and Miss Gwynn."

Joy dived for a housecoat and zipped it to her chin. "Yes," she called.

"The lieutenant would like you two to come to the Administration Building. They've got that crazy girl treed and they're trying to get her out without anybody hurt. She's asking for you."

"I'm sure there must be some mistake," Joy called haughtily.

"If there is, suppose you explain it to the lieutenant, miss."

Clara had come out by then; she too stepped into a housecoat. "Let's go see," she said to Joy.

"Are you crazy? What business is it of ours?"

The policeman knocked on the door again. "Coming, girls?"

"I certainly am," said Clara. She opened the door and said to Joy, "If there's anything we can do, we certainly ought to do it."

"How about it?" asked the policeman.

Joy wedged her feet into a pair of slippers and said grudgingly, "All right."

In slippers and housecoats they followed the trooper. There was one dispirited wolf-whistle from one of the males lounging in the common room. On the portico Paul Crouch and Jim Henschel were leaning against pillars.

Crouch saw Clara and started forward. "It's all right, Paul," Clara said. "They think we can help talk Ann out of the Ad Building."

"Be careful, Clara," he said.

"We'll take good care of your girl, mister," the trooper told him.

Your girl, Joy thought with outrage. She shot a bitter look at Henschel, who glanced at her sourly, with "So do me something" in his eyes.

They got into the police car; it spun them the short distance down the Mall to the Administration Building. With my looks, Joy burned, and the way I slave to keep them, *that* happens to me. And she, with her thick body and her slovenliness, has got herself a man and all the world can see he's crazy about her. And I'm aching as if I had a gumboil inside

me, and she's relaxed and happy, and we've been through exactly the same thing and I'll be eternally damned if *that's* fair.

Kathryn, McGivern, and a group of officers were waiting on the steps of the Ad Building.

Joy got out and said to Kathryn, "I guess you're not long for the Lambs now, are you?" She hoped it would hurt.

"I guess not," Kathryn said tiredly. "I don't know if I'm long for the Academy. I don't know why I shouldn't move into a new ranch-type house with a nice guy who loves me. I don't know why I should have mapped out a fifty-year rat-race for myself instead of a decent marriage with my own kind of guy."

Everything was going wrong, Joy raged silently. *Everything!*

Lt. Elkus sensed the hostility. "Enough of that, girls," he said. "The suspect up there in Dr. Matthewson's apartment said she wanted all three of you. Go to the landing—not beyond. Try to talk her into tossing the knife down. One of our men will take it from there. In case she rushes you with the knife I'll have a bead on her through the bannister. I'll—try to get her in the arm."

And that was for the birds, and so the kids wouldn't get nervous. If the suspect rushed them with the knife he would shoot to kill. You couldn't reliably wound a person in semi-darkness with a police .38, no matter how good you thought you were.

The weaver crouched and waited for the taxi. Everything had gone wrong, unfortunately, but there was plenty of money and you only had to get in touch with the bank for lawyers to spring up like dragon seed. That was the way it had always been, with the drugs thing in San Francisco, the girl in the playground in Berkeley, the car smash. Meanwhile the weaver sent out her tendrils from *Magazine X* whose very name revealed—but only to the cunning—that she wove a web. The taxi would come for Ann and take her away from this place where she had made such a mess of things, poor child, poor inexperienced child. She fondled the knife abstractedly; she had used it twice, but the lawyers would ex-

plain everything once the taxi came and she could get to a phone and call the bank.

Kathryn, Clara and Joy slowly climbed the steps to the landing after Lt. Elkus stationed himself against a wall below, checked his pistol and sighted it through the stair rails on the door.

"Ann," Kathryn called softly. "We're here. Joy and Clara and me."

The hoarse, unrecognizable voice said through the door, "I've got to get to a phone, you know. Call the bank."

"We'll see that you do," Kathryn said.

The door slammed open and Ann Riker stood there with the knife in her hand. Joy almost screamed at the sight of her face; Clara gripped her arm savagely. "Hello, Ann," she called shakily. "Won't you come down, please?"

The white lips hardly moved, but the hoarse voice said, "Ann's glad to see you. Won't you—please—come up." She swayed at the head of the stairs.

Kathryn said soothingly, "You've got to come down, Ann. We're all here now. We're waiting for you."

The figure didn't move. On the landing below Lt. Elkus drew a bead on her right shoulder. It was a possible shot; he'd made harder than that on the barracks range nine times out of ten. He wouldn't kill her, and he wouldn't miss her—as long as she didn't move. If she moved—not such an easy shot. Maybe he'd kill her. Maybe he'd miss her, and then—

He began to sweat. Why not? demanded somebody inside him. Get it over with. This is your best chance. Why not?

No reason why not. Unless, for some reason or other, you didn't like shooting crazed girls in cold blood.

Kathryn said a little louder, "Ann, the taxi's waiting. Please hurry."

The weaver at the center of Ann plucked a corner of her web, and the marionette-Ann stirred. Poor Ann, thought the weaver impersonally, poor child. That clod from the police, who thought he was out of sight down below, would probably hurt Ann. No, the weaver thought wisely, Ann mustn't go down those stairs. The weaver plucked at her web again.

Ann said, "Call the bank, please."

Clara cleared her throat. "Ann, dear," she called waver-

ingly. "We can't call the bank unless you come down. Please throw the—knife down, Ann. We'll take care of it for you."

"There is no need to take care of the knife," said the dead voice after a moment. "Take care of this." The marionette-figure jerked its arm, not the arm with the knife; and something came flying down the stairs. Lt. Elkus stretched to see; Kathryn was picking it up, looking at it.

"What—what's this, Ann?" she asked. "Oh! Dr. Matthewson's—hearing aid!"

"Take care of it," ordered the hoarse voice. "It came off when I—when I—when I—" She sounded dazed. "When Ann punished her. Ann shook her old neck and she died." The weaver scurried frantically around her web inside.

Lt. Elkus thought wonderingly: I'm losing my grip. She did kill the woman. I could have sworn—but that's the hearing aid, all right. I—

And then he was leaning forward, trying to see through the rails, poking the gun helplessly between them. That idiot Jackson girl was going up the steps, between him and Riker. He couldn't get a clear shot; she still had the knife—

Ann dropped the knife and began to weep. Kathryn took her arm and gently led her to the men below.

XXIII

THEY TOOK her away in a State Police squad car, the police surgeon sitting beside her, enough sedation in her to put a buffalo to sleep; they took her to trial but not to punishment, for there weren't any laws to punish Ann Riker, deviate, weaver, paranoid—and sick orphan girl.

Trooper Holtz said stolidly, "I told you she did it, Lieutenant. Remember? I said—"

"Get back to your car," Elkus ordered. "You too, Wayman, Hanford. I'll clean up around here."

Trooper Wayman said, "Okay, Lieutenant. What'll I tell

them back where they had the party? Can they all go home now?"

"Party?" Elkus thought dazedly, Oh yes, the party. The Lambs Gambol, or whatever they called it. These people had come out for an evening's fun and excitement—way, way back, long ago, before the Riker girl's nearly precipitated paranoia had finally taken the plunge.

Lt. Elkus rubbed his chin. "Tell them," he said, "the party's over." And I hope they had a perfectly marvy time, he added to himself.

"Easy, old-timer," said Gus Sprayragen, steadying McGivern with one hand and turning back the covers of the bed with the other.

McGivern protested, "Son, I've put myself to bed for better than sixty years and I don't need—"

"Sure," agreed Gus, easing him down. He bent and unlaced the scuffed black shoes, not patent leather, but close enough. The tux jacket was already neatly folded across the back of a chair.

Gus stood up. "Okay now?" he asked. "You—you don't look so hot, you know."

McGivern said, "I'm okay. Listen, boy—she's a fine woman. Don't let her get away."

"Thanks. I won't. Well, if you don't need anything, I guess I'll get along." He reached for the lightswitch of McGivern's room, and stopped. "Oh, Jesus—the pills." He fished two green capsules out of his pocket.

McGivern said sternly, "Now, don't be silly. If I want pills I'll take them myself. Get away from that pitcher! I know what I need better than any goddam police surgeon, and I don't need any—"

He stopped. He had a mouthful of pills, and Sprayragen was gently lifting his head to drink the water.

"Good night," said Gus, and he snapped off the light. He was grinning. That was a good old boy, he thought, heading down the stairs of the faculty wing to where Kathryn was waiting.

"He's fine," Gus reported. "I think he'll go right to sleep. Now let's get you to sleep; you've got a big day ahead of

you tomorrow. That damn three-day waiting period! I want to get married before you can change your mind."

Kathryn said, "Is there plenty of gas in your car?"

"Gas? In the car? Sure there's gas in the car. But—"

"How would you like to go to Illinois?"

He looked at her anxiously. "Honey," he said, "what the devil is there in Illinois?"

She laughed against his ear. She said, "Gus, you know all the time we were waiting around the Lambs House and I was reading? It was the World Almanac. And there are six or eight states where there isn't any waiting period at all, and it looks to me like the closest is Illinois, and—"

It didn't occur to them that they were standing in the middle of the driveway until the lights hit them. Edgar Boyleson, shivering at the wheel of his Jag, peered at the couple and recognized them. Slut, he thought pettishly, and leaned on the horn. They moved and he goosed the engine. He was frozen; he ached all over; he had been scared nearly to death; he wanted hotel and bed. But still, he thought, cheering up a little once the gates of the Academy were behind him, what a story he would have to give them down on Eighth Street!

The pills were pretty good, McGivern had to admit. Once he was on his feet again he felt weak and worn, but he didn't hurt.

McGivern didn't bother with the light. He crossed to the closet, pulled out the shabby suitcase, climbed on it and felt for the bottle at the back of the shelf.

McGivern's last pint, he thought sadly. McGivern ascends to glory on wings of the cheapest blended rye in the store, \$1.98 a pint. He found his old gold-cased pen knife and slit the plastic band around the neck of the bottle. From his little store of glassware on the shelf above the sink he selected two tumblers and filled one with water from the tap, the other with amber from the bottle.

I don't feel like a murderer, he told himself, but I suppose I am. It was just too good a chance to miss; you don't often get to play God.

He lit a cigarette and puffed; McGivern's last smoke. Down went a gulp of rye, chased by the water, chased by the

smoke. A bar of pain formed in his chest and ran down his left arm.

He didn't much hate Ann Riker any more, for all that she had tried to pervert and buy young Kathryn. The poor Ann Riker had bungled everything. Even her attempt to murder Dr. Matthewson.

For when he had found Dr. Matthewson kneeling on the grass of the Mall, the old woman was recovering consciousness after Ann Riker's bungled attempt at choking her to death. He had been forced to break her neck himself.

So, he sighed, he had done everything he set out to do after all. Riker, goaded by him, hadn't done the job as well as he'd hoped, and he'd had to finish it for her. But Riker was removed, and Dr. Matthewson was removed. Now there was only one left.

He drank deep.





The girls of Lambda Lambda Lambda...

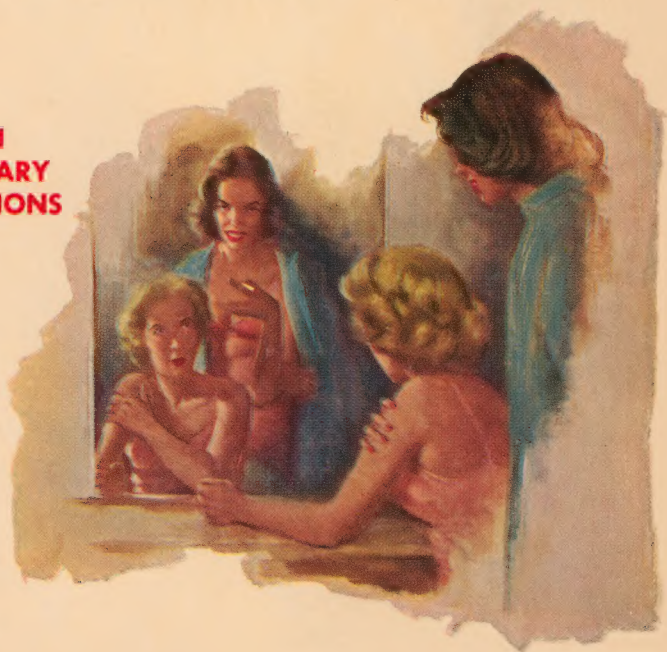
JOY—who thought study didn't pay, when there were easier ways to get good grades from a young professor...

KATHRYN—who came from the wrong side of the tracks, and was fair game for anyone who knew it...

CLARA—who knew all about mathematics, but forgot that two and two could add up to trouble...

They burned their candles at both ends, and the glow was magnificent—*until the whole campus threatened to go up in smoke.*

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The girls of Lambda Lambda Lambda...

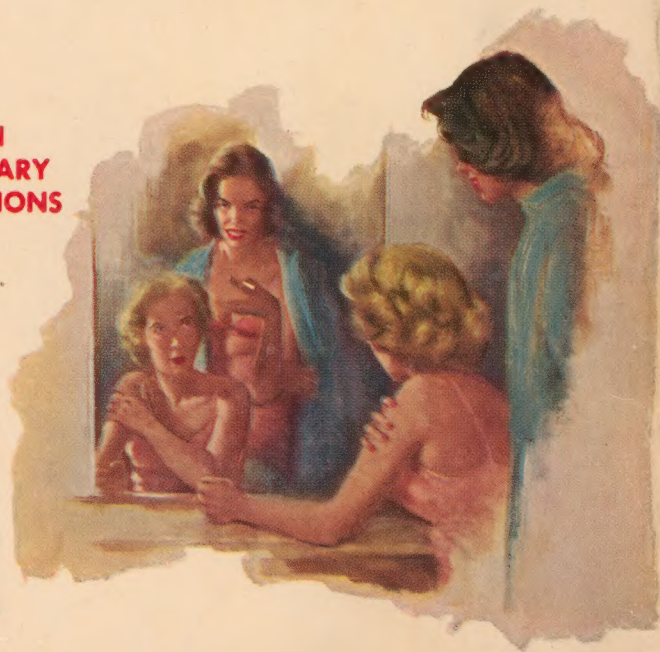
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SORORITY HOUSE JORDAN PARK

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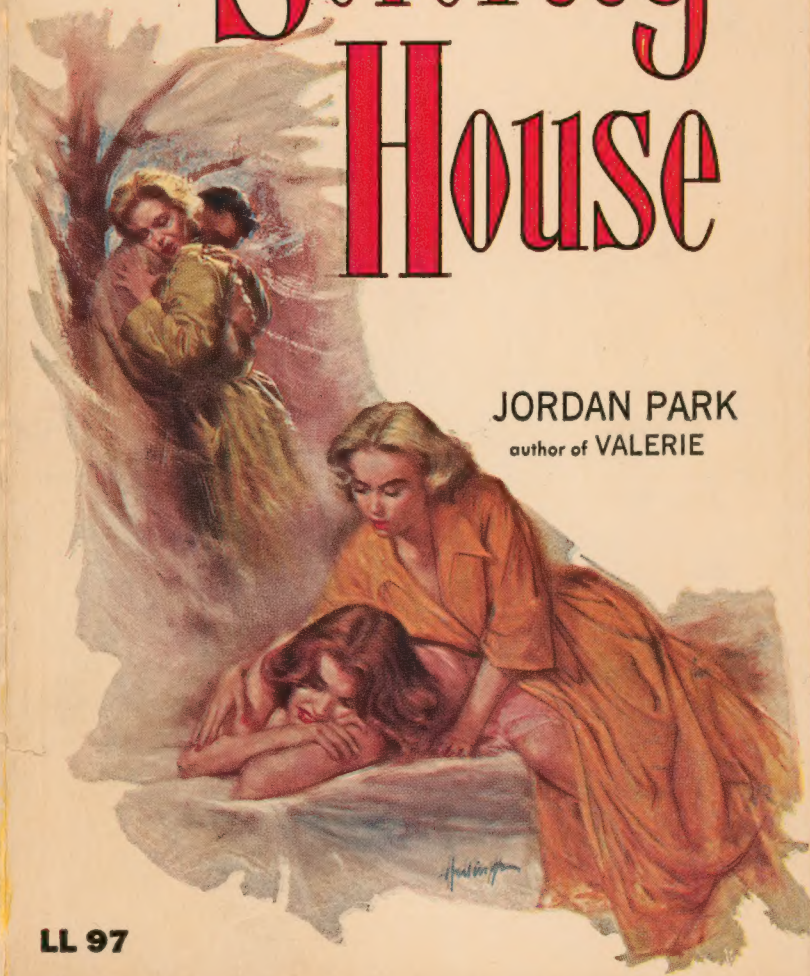
97



IT WAS A DESPERATE PLACE—
OF WOMEN, GUILT, AND DESIRE

Sorority House

JORDAN PARK
author of VALERIE



LL 97



The girls of Lambda Lambda Lambda...

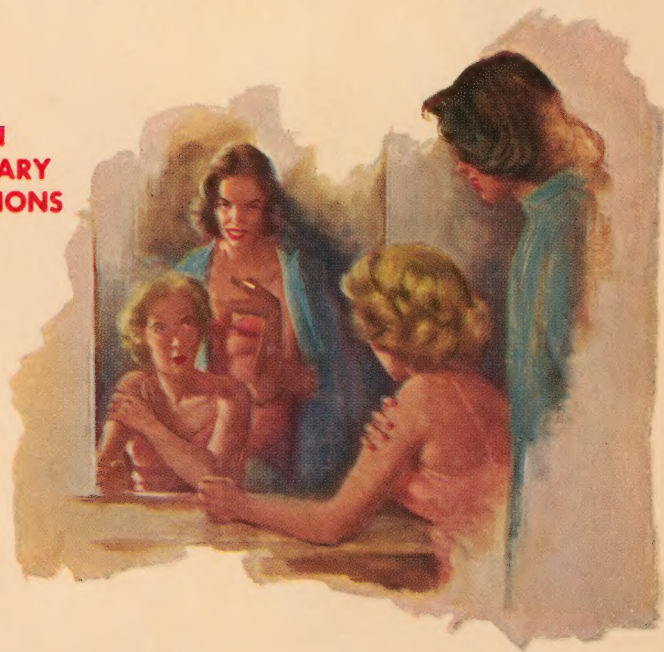
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IT WAS A DESPERATE PLACE—
OF WOMEN, GUILT, AND DESIRE

Sorority House

JORDAN PARK
author of VALERIE

